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REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON  
MARKING HISTORICAL SITES  
IN RHODE ISLAND

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1913







THE FRENCH CAMP GROUND, PROVIDENCE

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

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*Rhode Island Historical Society*

# Report of Committee

ON

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# MARKING HISTORICAL SITES IN RHODE ISLAND

MADE TO THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AT ITS

JANUARY SESSION, 1913

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PROVIDENCE, R. I.:

E. L. FREEMAN COMPANY, PRINTERS

1914

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July 2

D. O. D.  
FEB 20 1915

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*To the Honorable, the General Assembly of the State of  
Rhode Island and Providence Plantations:*

The Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Historical Society to which, in connection with the Secretary of State, was committed the task of marking Historical Sites in the State of Rhode Island respectfully begs leave to submit the following report.

The Executive Committee appointed the following gentlemen a subcommittee, "the Committee on Marking Historical Sites," to superintend the placing of memorials: Wilfred H. Munro, *Chairman*; Clarence S. Brigham, Amasa M. Eaton, David W. Hoyt, Norman M. Isham, William MacDonald, Walter E. Ranger, William B. Weeden, George F. Weston, Charles P. Bennett, *Secretary of State*.

This Committee has erected memorials as follows:

A tablet was erected at Nockum Hill, Barrington, on June 23, 1906, in accordance with the earnest request of another historical association. The tablet bears this inscription:

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
IN MASSACHUSETTS  
WAS FOUNDED NEAR THIS SPOT  
A. D. 1663

REV. JOHN MYLES

BENJAMIN ALBY

JOHN BUTTERWORTH

JOSEPH CARPENTER

ELDAD KINGSLEY

JAMES BROWN

NICHOLAS TANNER

FOUNDERS

On July 18, 1906, a tablet bearing this inscription was placed on the Governor Bull House in Newport:

“THE GOVERNOR BULL HOUSE”  
 THE OLDEST HOUSE IN RHODE ISLAND  
 BUILT, IN PART, IN 1639 BY  
 HENRY BULL  
 GOVERNOR, UNDER THE ROYAL CHARTER, OF THE COLONY OF  
 RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE  
 PLANTATIONS  
 IN THE YEARS 1685-86 AND 1690

On August 8, 1906, the Gilbert Stuart House, North Kingstown was marked by a tablet with the following inscription:

GILBERT STUART  
 BORN HERE 1775      DIED IN BOSTON 1828

---

A GREAT AMERICAN ARTIST  
 TAUGHT BY WEST AND REYNOLDS  
 HE YEARNED TO PORTRAY OUR  
 GREATEST CITIZEN

---

HIS PORTRAITS EMBODY  
 THE WISDOM AND DIGNITY OF  
 WASHINGTON

On October 2, 1906, two tablets were erected to mark the site of the Roger Williams House and Spring, on North Main street, Providence. The inscriptions were as follows:

A FEW RODS EAST OF  
THIS SPOT STOOD THE  
HOUSE  
OF  
ROGER WILLIAMS  
FOUNDER OF PROVIDENCE  
1636

UNDER THIS HOUSE  
STILL FLOWS  
THE  
ROGER WILLIAMS  
SPRING

To commemorate the fortifications thrown up at Field's Point, two tablets were erected on May 16, 1907, bearing inscriptions as follows:

FORT  
INDEPENDENCE  
ERECTED  
ON ROBIN HILL, 1775  
STRENGTHENED, 1814  
  
THESE EARTHWORKS  
WERE THROWN UP  
IN 1775  
AND STRENGTHENED  
IN 1814

On May 27, 1907, the Reynold's House, at Bristol, was marked with a tablet as follows:

THIS HOUSE BUILT  
ABOUT THE YEAR 1698 BY  
JOSEPH REYNOLDS  
WAS OCCUPIED BY  
LAFAYETTE  
AS HIS HEADQUARTERS SEPTEMBER 1778  
DURING THE WAR OF  
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

On June 15, 1907, on the Babbitt Farm at Wickford, a tablet was placed with this inscription:

HERE  
WERE BURIED  
IN ONE GRAVE  
FORTY MEN  
WHO DIED IN THE SWAMP FIGHT  
OR ON THE RETURN MARCH  
TO  
RICHARD SMITH'S BLOCKHOUSE  
DECEMBER, 1675

The camp of the French troops, near Rochambeau Avenue, in Providence, was, on July 29, 1907, marked by a tablet with the following inscription:

ON THIS GROUND  
 BETWEEN HOPE STREET AND  
 NORTH MAIN STREET AND  
 NORTH OF ROCHAMBEAU AVENUE  
 THE FRENCH TROOPS  
 COMMANDED BY  
 COUNT ROCHAMBEAU  
 WERE ENCAMPED  
 IN  
 1782  
 ON THEIR MARCH FROM YORKTOWN  
 TO BOSTON WHERE THEY  
 EMBARKED FOR FRANCE

September 21, 1907, a tablet was placed upon a boulder in Central Falls to mark the scene of "Pierce's Fight." This tablet was stolen. It was replaced by one which bears the following inscription:

PIERCE'S FIGHT  
 NEAR THIS SPOT  
 CAPTAIN MICHAEL PIERCE  
 AND HIS COMPANY OF  
 PLYMOUTH COLONISTS  
 AMBUSHED AND OUTNUMBERED WERE  
 ALMOST ANNIHILATED  
 BY THE INDIANS  
 MARCH 26 1676

On October 19, 1907, the Massasoit Spring at Warren was marked by a tablet with this inscription:

THIS TABLET  
PLACED BESIDE THE GUSHING WATER  
KNOWN FOR MANY GENERATIONS AS  
MASSASOIT'S SPRING  
COMMEMORATES THE GREAT  
INDIAN SACHEM MASSASOIT  
"FRIEND OF THE WHITE MAN"  
RULER OF THIS REGION WHEN THE  
PILGRIMS OF THE MAYFLOWER  
LANDED AT PLYMOUTH  
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1620

May 30, 1908, a tablet bearing the following inscription was placed upon Drum Rock, in the village of Apponaug, in the town of Warwick:

DRUM ROCK  
A  
TRYSTING-SIGNAL AND  
MEETING PLACE OF THE  
COWESET INDIANS  
AND THEIR  
KINDRED NARRAGANSETTS

July 6, 1908, dedicatory exercises were held at Spring Green, Warwick, in connection with the erection of a tablet to mark "Camp Ames." The tablet bears this inscription:





CAMP AMES, SPRING GREEN FARM, WARWICK





THIS FIELD KNOWN AS  
 CAMP AMES ON SPRING  
 GREEN FARM WAS THE  
 CAMP GROUND OF THE  
 THIRD RHODE ISLAND  
 VOLUNTEERS  
 SUBSEQUENTLY THE  
 THIRD RHODE ISLAND  
 HEAVY ARTILLERY  
 PREVIOUS TO THEIR  
 DEPARTURE FOR THE SEAT  
 OF WAR SEPTEMBER 7  
 1816

September 10, 1908, a tablet was placed upon the house in Portsmouth in which General Prescott was captured by Lieutenant Colonel Barton during the Revolutionary War. The inscription is as follows:

IN THIS HOUSE,  
 HIS HEADQUARTERS,  
 THE BRITISH GENERAL PRESCOTT  
 WAS TAKEN PRISONER  
 ON THE NIGHT OF JULY 9, 1777  
 BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL BARTON  
 OF THE RHODE ISLAND LINE

October 17, 1908, a tablet was placed in Johnston to mark the location of the Indian soapstone quarry. The tablet bears this inscription:

AN INDIAN QUARRY  
 ONE OF THE FEW IN NEW ENGLAND  
 FROM THIS SOAPSTONE LEDGE  
 NOW ONLY PARTLY UNCOVERED  
 THE INDIANS  
 FASHIONED UTENSILS  
 FOR FAMILY USE AND FOR TRADE

On May 5, 1909, the Stephen Hopkins House in Providence, was marked by a tablet with this inscription:

STEPHEN HOPKINS  
 1707-1785  
 MERCHANT AND SHIPBUILDER,  
 TEN TIMES GOVERNOR OF RHODE ISLAND,  
 CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT,  
 CHANCELLOR OF BROWN UNIVERSITY,  
 MEMBER OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS,  
 SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE,  
 LIVED IN THIS HOUSE 1742-1785.  
 WASHINGTON WAS HERE A GUEST APRIL 6, 1776.  
 THIS BUILDING ERECTED  
 AT THE CORNER OF SOUTH MAIN STREET ABOUT 1742  
 WAS REMOVED TO ITS  
 PRESENT SITE IN 1804.

June 24, 1909, a tablet was erected upon the General Nathanael Greene House, in Coventry, with this inscription:

NATHANAEL GREENE  
 OF THE  
 GENERALS OF THE AMERICAN  
 REVOLUTION  
 SECOND ONLY TO WASHINGTON  
 BUILT THIS HOUSE IN 1770  
 AND LIVED IN IT UNTIL AS A PRIVATE  
 HE JOINED THE ARMY  
 AT CAMBRIDGE IN 1775

October 27, 1909, the Esek Hopkins House, Providence,  
 was marked by a tablet. The inscription is as follows:

ESEK HOPKINS  
 1718-1802  
 FIRST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF  
 OF THE  
 AMERICAN NAVY  
 LIVED IN THIS HOUSE

Photographs of the memorials were taken and reproductions are filed herewith. As far as possible the poems and speeches delivered at the dedications of the memorials are also filed with this report.

The cost of the memorials, an itemized statement of which has already been published in the reports of the State Auditor, is \$1,500.87,—eighty seven cents more than the sum appropriated.

For Tablets. . . . .	\$1,269 00
Mason Work. . . . .	116 22
Printing. . . . .	52 00
Photographs. . . . .	63 65
	<hr/>
	\$1,500 87

The expenses incurred by members of the Committee in connection with the placing and dedication of the tablets have in no case been charged against the appropriation.

At the last session of the Legislature an additional appropriation of five hundred dollars (\$500) was made for the continuation of the Committee's work. Orders were placed as quickly as possible after this second appropriation became available, for the casting of seven tablets to be placed in Little Compton, Newport, Pawtucket and Providence.

These tablets were completed so late in the autumn that, in view of the uncertain weather, it seemed best to defer their placing until the spring. Their cost thus far has been \$438. The additional expenses that must be incurred in connection with their erection will probably exhaust the appropriation. A report will hereafter be made respecting their placing and dedication.

Respectfully submitted,

For the Executive Committee,

WILFRED H. MUNRO, *Chairman.*

FEBRUARY 18, 1913.





THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, NOCKUM HILL, BARRINGTON



# THEN AND NOW

or

## JOHN MYLES

One of the Immortals

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At the dedication of the Nockum Hill tablet the following poem was read  
by the Reverend Martin S. Williston

---

“Twas long surmised, the age of gold,  
Lay in the fabled days of old,  
Those hoary days, that yet wer new,  
When men wer babes and sages few,  
When mind and body both wer bare,  
And man’s sole raiment was his hair.  
We’re told indeed, that Father Adam  
And that new lady, his first Madam,  
Wer wondrous peopl in their way,  
Unmatcht by any later day—  
For gray tradition long has claimed  
That these two Ancients I hav named,  
Wer first in valu as in time—  
And man’s first moment was his prime,  
Since, brooding o’er her cosmic plan,  
Great Nature hatcht the perfect man;  
But if she did, we wel might beg

She'd lay another human eg  
 Of like incomparabl strain  
 And hatch us such a man agin.  
 Since none like him from then til now  
 On life's broad stage has made his bow.  
 But man was least in that dim past  
 His *worst* was first, his best is last.  
 Great nature in her primal plan  
 Commenc't with rudimentary man,  
 And bilt him slowly age by age  
 Unitl he reacht his modern state.  
 A creature wiser, abler too,  
 Than walkt the erth when time was new.  
 The world is better now than then,  
 Advanct the race of living men,  
 While our "New Woman" is a queen,  
 Whose like the Ages had not seen;  
 Nor is it pride that moves us thus  
 To cite the honor du to us,  
 But timely zeal to be exact  
 And state the simpl homely fact,  
 For who of us would care to be,  
 The tenants of a century  
 When guileless saints from gibbets swung  
 And mumbling crones wer promptly hung  
 For gazing slantways thru their eyes  
 And playing they wer darkly wise—  
 When such as chose to preach and pray



In their own set and special way.  
 Wer curst and scourged and bruised with blows  
 As Heven's most contumacious foes,  
 While other for the heinous sin  
 Of withering age and wrinkled skin  
 Wer shrewdly charged with taking part,  
 In black and diabolic art,  
 That art a myth, a bogey quite,  
 A specter born of childish fright  
 At mouthings of neurotic trance,  
 Or antics of "Saint Vitus' Dance;"  
 But peaceful "Friend" or trembling witch  
 (It littl mattered which was which),  
 Fell both alike beneath the ban,  
 As ruthless foes of God and man,  
 Because believd to be "too thick"  
 With him the scornful called "Old Nick"  
 And godly Baptists went to jail,  
 Adjudged to be without the pale  
 Of public justis, since they saw  
 The reading of a higher law  
 Than Sheriff's writ or Priest's command  
 Or aught engrossed by human hand,  
 And took their orders from the sky,  
 In mandates of the Lord Most High.  
 Followed the curse and clanking chain,  
 Ferocious hate and penal pain,  
 Ordained by Church, decreed by State

These stalwarts to exterminate,  
 For no offenses that we can see  
 But fervent love of liberty.

The "good old days!—Perhaps they wer,  
 But frankly who would not prefer  
 The "Brand new" date, the latest sun,  
 The radiant century just begun!  
 Spans our new sky the larger hope,  
 Expands our thought with wider scope  
 Than wer vouchsaft to days of yore,  
 Since time leads on from less to more  
 And we who now possess the stage  
 Are blest as was no former age,  
 Tho surely 'twas no fault to be  
 A nativ of antiquity;  
 Our forebears merit neither praise not blame  
 Because they hither erly came  
 And spent their brief allotted time  
 Ere yet our race had reacht its prime;  
 We giv them thanks that they, not we,  
 Arrived before we came to be.  
 Where wer we now, had they not been,  
 Those massiv, stern, Homeric men,  
 Sincere and somber, harsh and tru,  
 Gallant and grim and strong to do,  
 Who joind to serv the public weal  
 Rough hands, stout harts and wil of steel.  
 Perchance had we been less than they

If sent to tame their strenuous day.  
 Then turn we back with friendly eyes  
 To those departed centuries,  
 When virtue's self was crude and rude,  
 And boistrous ruffians oft wer good.  
 Their errors we may well condone,  
 As we attempt to mend our own.

Thus paying tribute to the past,  
 Yet counting Time's best day its last,  
 We come to laurel with our praise  
 A name sent down from ancient days—  
 A memory, a wraith, a shade—  
 Nathless a star no night can fade:  
 Our hero was a soldier tru,  
 Who fought his fight as brave men do,  
 Then bowed submissive to the call  
 Of mortal fate, that summons all.  
 "Ded!" So the mossy marbles say,  
 While centuries dim hav past away  
 Since first he slept, returned to dust,  
 The voiceless slumbers of the just.  
 "Ded," say you! *He*—the friend of God—  
 He—lost beneath the soulless sod!  
 He *lives*—wil ever liv, for vain  
 The might of deth, its prison chain,  
 When valorous souls its challenge meet  
 Empowered its malis to defeat—  
 For mind is master, tho the fo

May lay the helpless body low,  
 If but the wil its empire hold,  
 With spirit tru and Conscience bold.  
 'Twas thus prevaild the dauntless man  
 Undreding fate and deth's dark ban.

Whens came and why, our preacher knight,  
 With courage and with soul alight,  
 Tempting the lonely wilderness,  
 Rimmd round with savage Heathennesse?

He came, our valiant Myles, because  
 A dastard king and shameless laws  
 Struck at God's face—smote manhood down,  
 Claimd right "divine" for lord and crown—  
 And drove without the altar-rail  
 Whoever's soul was not for sale—  
 Vowd scourge and sword and prison cell  
 And awesome woes of lurid hell  
 To all who with unbending knee  
 Withstood the church's harsh decree.  
 No craven, Myles, to su for grace  
 Or barter truth for power or place;  
 Manlike he stood and made reply;  
 "I serv the king enthroned on High,—  
 No mortal may my spirit bind,  
 No law constrain the dethless mind.  
 King and Lord Bishop count for naught  
 In the imperial realms of thought.

I fear not man—I wil not yield,  
With truth my buckler,—God my shield.”

Thereon, the righteous man made haste  
To cross old Ocean’s weltering waste,  
To gain, relieved of forct control,  
The larger freedom of the soul.  
With joy our exile toucht the strand  
Of our new Western Promist Land;  
The altars on whose virgin sod  
Read, “Welcome all the friends of God.  
With generous thoughts and harts entwined  
Behold a shrine for humankind.”  
Thus dreamd the profet, nobly bent  
On making real his high intent.  
Alas, for dream and vision fair,  
For hopes that vanisht into air!  
Not yet, not yet, the Golden Age  
Nor love writ large on history’s page!  
Too prompt the saint to lift the sword,  
Who caught this message from his Lord;  
“Smite swiftly, smite them hip and thigh,  
These Belial Sons of Blasfemy!”

Now, blasfemy, in days of yore  
Ment honest thinking, nothing more;  
If man with man could not agree  
About unknown reality,  
Out from its scabbard leapt the blade

To make the doubtful soul afraid,  
 Since not to grant what I held tru,  
 Was proof that God detested you,  
 And if one kept his stubborn way  
 He'd meet his doom at Judgment Day,  
 For only everlasting fire  
 Could satisfy the holy ire  
 That flamed against the errant mind,  
*My way to follow disinclined.*

But Pastor Myles held fast to this,  
 That loyal Christians should not miss  
 Immersion—drenching and complete,  
 Baptized thruout from hed to feet;  
 “Nay, nay,” proclaimed the ruling sect,  
 ’Tis not enjoined upon the “Elect”  
 To sink in water deep as that  
 Before the shrine we worship at;  
 A drop or two is wet enough  
 Perdition’s balefires to rebuff—  
 Now, by the Lord we love and serv  
 From this high doctrine, we’ll not swerv.  
 Recant, deny! “ ’Tis dedly sin,  
 Baptizing so much water in.”  
 “But right am I,” said Myles in turn,  
 “Recant! Deny!! I’d sooner burn.  
 Think what you wil—lo, I’m content—  
 To think as you I’ll ne’er consent.  
 My thought, my wil, my hart are free—

No man shal wrest my soul from me;  
It fears me not to face your wrath,  
If I but walk the 'Narrow Path.' ”

And thus he went his dauntless way,  
Without concernment or dismay,  
Patient and gentl, staunch and tru,  
Brave herald of a Gospel new.

Meantime a cycle has unrolled  
And time is ripe with memories old—  
And stil with thankfulness do we  
Extol this Son of Liberty.

MARTIN S. WILLISTON.



## THE GOVERNOR BULL HOUSE

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Address of William Paine Sheffield, Jr., June 18, 1906

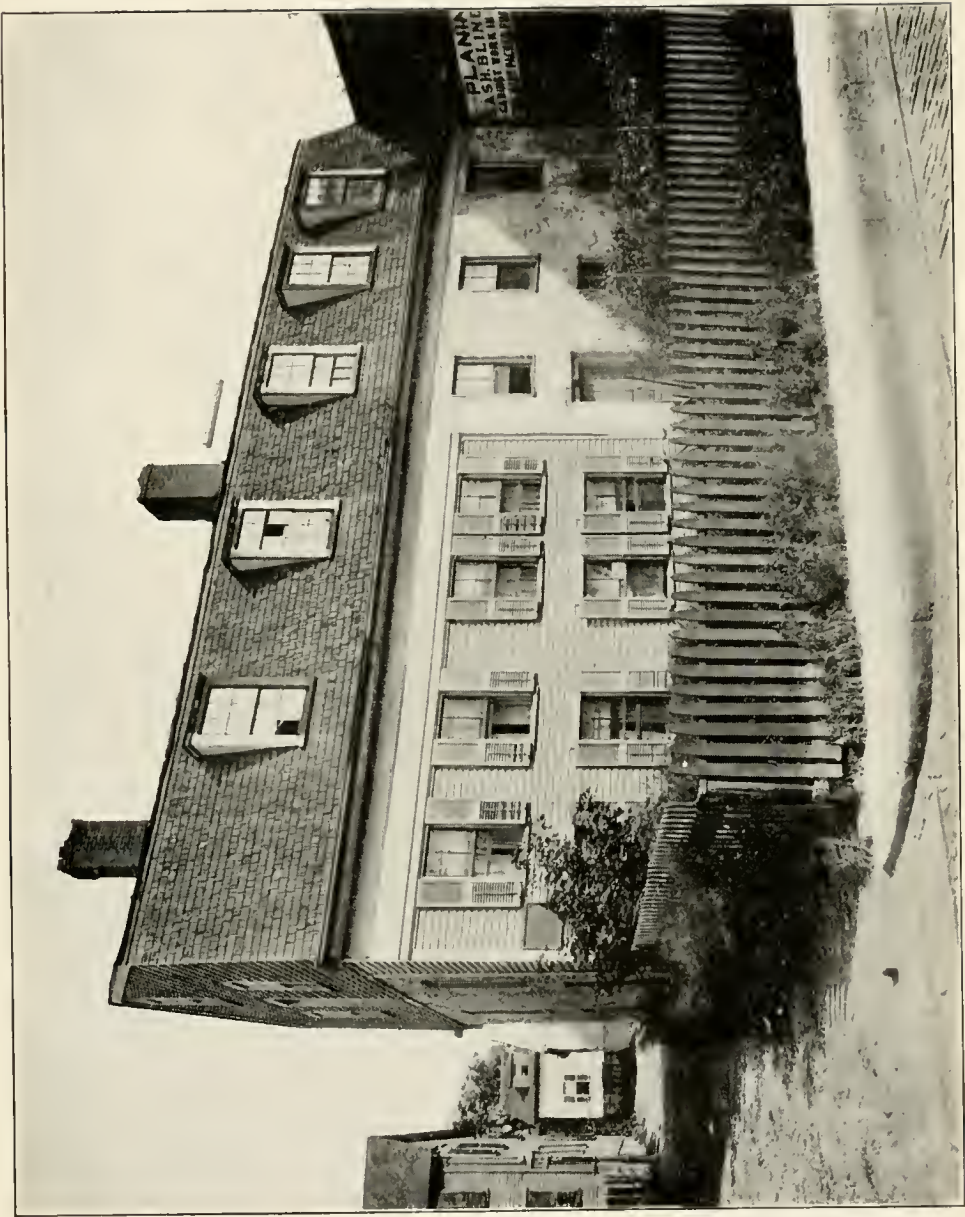
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This tablet is placed on this house, now the oldest in Rhode Island, in honor of a colonial governor. It recalls the trials our forefathers endured for civil and religious liberty for themselves and their children.

Henry Bull was born in England in 1610. On July 17, 1635, when twenty-five years old, he sailed from London to America in the ship *James*. In 1636, he and his wife Elizabeth, were members of the church in Roxbury, but on November 20, 1637, he with others was warned to deliver up all guns, pistols, swords, powder, shot, etc., because "the opinions and revelations of Mr. Wheelwright and Mrs. Hutchinson have seduced and led into dangerous error many of the people here in New England." On March 7, 1637, he was one of the eighteen original settlers of Pocasset who signed the following compact strongly religious in its nature:

"We whose names are underwritten do here solemnly in the presence of Jehovah incorporate ourselves into a Bodie Politick, and as he shall help will submit our persons, lives and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and to all those perfect and abso-





THE GOVERNOR BULL HOUSE, NEWPORT



lute laws of his given us in his holy word of truth, to be guided and judged thereby.”

He was also one of nine to place his name to the agreement of April, 1639, of the settlers of Newport.

The labors of man have greatly changed the place the early settlers found here, until a titled Englishman has called it the most beautiful watering place in the world. In ancient times it was a place of wolves and wild Indians. A river ran through what is now River lane, from Tanner street (now West Broadway). There was a spring on Spring street, near the foot of Barney street, and the town was built on both sides of it. Coddington, Easton, Clark and Bull had home lots laid out to them to the north of the spring.

The first house in Newport was built by Governor Easton on his lot on Farewell street, to the north of where the Quaker meeting house now stands; it was burned by the Indians. Governor Coddington's house stood on Marlborough street.

The Bull house is too substantial to have been built all at once in those early days. The date usually assigned to it is from 1638 to 1640, but it is almost certain that very little of the house as it stands goes back to the dates assumed. Tradition asserts that the southern end of the building is the older.

During the years 1640, 1641 and 1642, Henry Bull, young and sturdy, served as town sergeant. He was also to suppress the sale of liquors. For many years he served

as deputy and in the years 1685, 1686 and 1690 as governor of this colony. It was during his term as chief magistrate, that Rhode Island's rights were attacked by Governor Andros, but Rhode Island fared better than the other colonies and managed to obtain its ancient charter.

Governor Bull married three times and every generation of his descendants has been prominent in public affairs. It is well to pause before the home of an early settler who was of a character like that of Henry Bull, and whose descendants are such as his. It is such an example which will impress the children of all races among us that they must educate themselves to perform the duties of citizenship.

WILLIAM PAINE SHEFFIELD, JR.







THE BIRTHPLACE OF GILBERT STUART, NORTH KINGSTOWN

## GILBERT STUART

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The Address of William B. Weeden, August 8, 1906

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Gilbert Stuart's father, having fought with the pretender at Culloden, according to tradition, fled to America and established a snuff-mill in the upper gorge of the Petaquamscott. The mill has been replaced by a saw-mill, but the cottage, fairly preserved, stands as it was. In it the artist was born in 1755.

The inevitable tendency of temperament was revealed early in the boy.

At thirteen, he painted the Bannisters—portraits now in the Redwood Library. Crude pictures, they were like the sitters. At sixteen, he painted a portrait of his own father. In the previous year, he had studied under Cosmo Alexander, a fairly capable instructor.

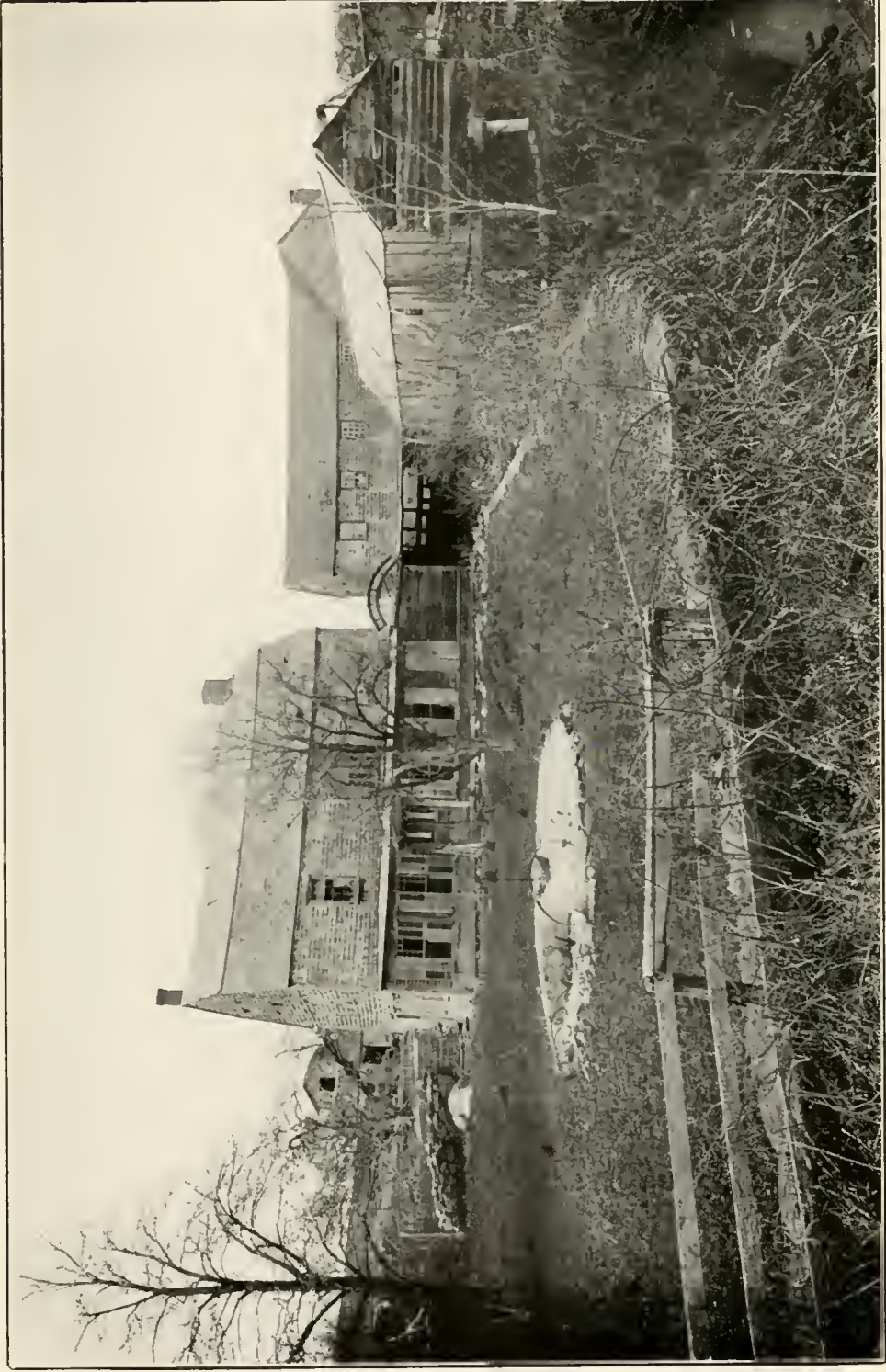
Alexander took Stuart to England, promising him every opportunity for instruction in his art. Unfortunately the patron died and the protegee who was studying at the University of Glasgow could not sustain himself. He could earn by his brush a simple support, but was not able to dress and spend like his fellow students. He came home by the way of Nova Scotia, in a collier, experiencing a very hard and trying voyage.



Though he spent rather less than two years in England on his first visit, he sharpened his facilities at the most impressible season of youth. Coming home, he could draw portraits well enough to obtain sitters among the wealthy Jews of Rhode Island. His fame extended to Philadelphia, where his uncle, Mr. Anthony, was proud of his ingenious nephew, and employed him to paint a portrait of himself, and of his wife and children. In this early work he learned to paint by painting, but did not rest contented with his meagre information.

In Newport, he painted and studied from life under the difficulties of the time. Clubbing with his friend Waterhouse, they hired a "strong-muscled blacksmith" for a model at a half a dollar an evening. The country and the times were unfavorable for art. In the spring of 1775, the last ship leaving Boston Port carried our artist bound for London.

At twenty-two years of age Stuart was domiciled with Sir Benjamin West, receiving instruction in West's studio, and allowed at times to contribute incidental work to the master's pictures. His capacity and facility in color fast made its way. But it did not depend on methods or any tricks of art. As West indicated very clearly to some of his pupils, "It is of no use to steal Stuart's colors; if you want to paint as he does you must steal his eyes." The spirit of the artist expressed itself in music as well as in color. He fortuitously stumbled on a position as organist at £30 per year; which helped to support him in his novitiate.



THE BIRTHPLACE OF GILBERT STUART (REAR VIEW)



The first picture that brought our artist into notice was a full length portrait of Mr. Grant, a Scotch gentleman. Coming for the first sitting in very cold weather, Grant remarked, that it was a better time for skating and proposed an expedition out of doors. Stuart had learned to strike out on the Pettaquamscott River; his celerity now brought crowds to witness on the Serpentine, the sporting place of London. The occasion prompted him to post Grant when the sitting came to pass, as a skater with a winter-scene in the back ground. Baretta an Italian coming accidentally into Stuart's room when the portrait was nearly finished, exclaimed, "What a charming picture! Who, but the great artist West could have painted such an one?" Stuart confessed that the picture was all his own. It was exhibited at Somerset House, attracting so much notice that the artist was afraid to go to the academy to meet the looks and inquiries of the multitude.

Not long after he established himself in London, painting portraits at prices only less than those obtained by Reynolds and Gainsborough. His rendering in character in the sitter was original and masterly, as was his use of color. Picturesque in his own conversation, he could draw forth a statesman, general, or farmer, in the essential nature of each, and place his sitter literally in the best light. Dr. Waterhouse, a competent authority, knowing him thoroughly, said that in conversation and "Confabulation" as the critic expressed it, no man was his superior. He kept the sitter talking, drawing out his inmost char-



acteristics, for he could enter into any man. With soldiers, he would go into battle, with statesmen he would discourse on Gibbon or Hume; with lawyers, merchants or men of leisure, each in his own way; and with ladies in all ways.

If he would set forth a farmer on canvass, he would surprise the subject not only by bringing out the nice points of horses and cattle, but by profound knowledge of manures, and of the food of plants. It was said that, his wit was ample and sometimes redundant.

The humble boy of Pettaquamscott had become a leading artist, favored by the Court of England, petted by aristocratic society, a central figure in the most brilliant circles of London. The ardent nature of his Scottish loyalist father, joined to the serene English temper of his mother had formed a typical artist. Yet there was something ampler and larger in this man—something hardly formulated and quite unappreciated in the purely English mind. England was just beginning to learn what colonial expansion meant, how the face of the civilized world was to be changed by the expansive principle. Children of the little island transplanted to a far away continent were being enlarged thereby and were giving expression to new continental ideas.

Stuart had painted the King; he now burned to portray the greatest man of the time—Washington, the Father of his Country. Going back to his own land, he settled in Philadelphia in 1792, to embody on canvass, that

“noble personification of wisdom and goodness, known to subsequent generations as Stuart’s Washington.” As Ralph Waldo Emerson put it, “He would seem to have absorbed into that face all the serenity of these United States.”

We might fill the hour with entertaining matter drawn from his talk and play of character. He had wit, satire and anecdote without limit, for any occasion. When he did not fascinate, he often frightened his companions. Of his original and creative force there are ample testimonials.

Never jealous of his competitors, the artist had many troubles with sitters. When a picture went wrong, he would discard it as lumber, and no remonstrance or petition could induce him to resume it. Friends would not be satisfied with a portrait. Once after several trials, all lost temper; the mercurial artist dropped his palate and took snuff, exclaiming, “what a——business is this of a portrait painter; you bring him a potato and expect he will paint you a peach.”

After a brief sojourn in Washington, he removed to Boston in 1803. He painted many fine portraits there, but his powers failed, until gout ended his life in 1828. His convivial habits beguiled, while improvidence and poverty embarrassed him.

It is easy to cry out genius when the narrator and critic fails to comprehend and render forth the essential nature of the subject in hand. Yet we can hardly treat this great

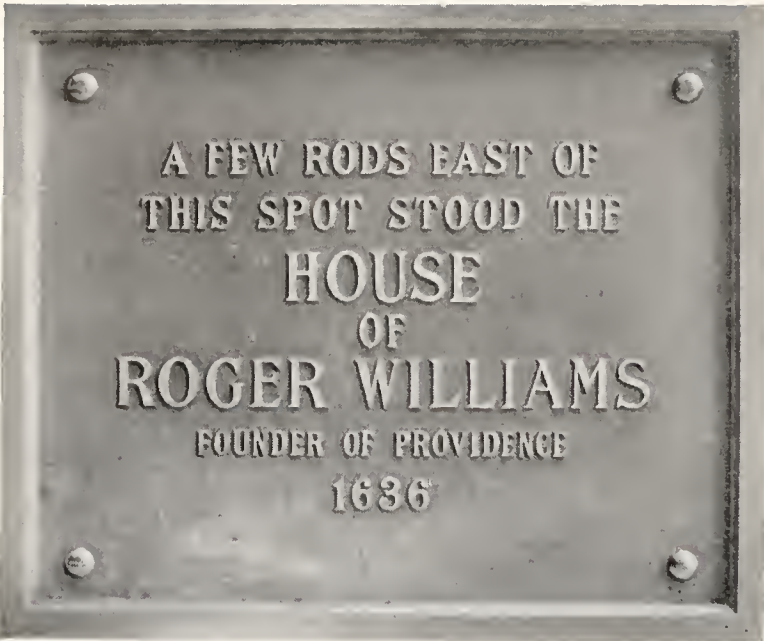
artist without bringing in the unformulated characteristics of genius. We have alluded to his extraordinary gifts for drawing out the inmost character of a sitter. This process resulted from powers far more potent than tact and dexterity. To put it briefly, his own well was deep and broad enough to contain the casual visitor dropped into it. Washington Allston knew his ground, as he said of him, "his mind was of a strong and original cast, his perceptions as clear as they were just, and in the power of illustration he has rarely been equalled."

He could not have rendered the frontier surveyor and militia general into a Roman senator—into the yet larger statesman of the coming America—had not his mind embraced in itself something universal; genius in short. Narrowing our view to a detail; the wise have differed in discussing his color, his especial field of art; some contending that his tints are too strong. But if we regard the whole man it would seem that he used color according to Titian—to convey the deepest ideas of the artist.


WILLIAM B. WEEDEN







A FEW RODS EAST OF  
THIS SPOT STOOD THE  
HOUSE  
OF  
ROGER WILLIAMS  
FOUNDER OF PROVIDENCE  
1636



UNDER THIS HOUSE  
STILL FLOWS.  
THE  
ROGER WILLIAMS  
SPRING

## THE HOUSE AND HOME-LOT OF ROGER WILLIAMS

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By Mr. Norman M. Isham

October 2, 1906

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Tradition puts the site of the Roger Williams house near the northeast corner of North Main and Howland streets. Upon the house which now occupies that corner, the State of Rhode Island, acting through this Society, has [just] placed a tablet of bronze affirming as a fact that a few rods east of this spot did actually stand the house of the founder of the State. It is proper, then, to explain what is known of the home lot and the house of the founder.

Briefly, then, it is certain that Roger Williams lived on the home lot whereon the tablet says his house stood. That, of course, would ordinarily be enough. But the tablet points to a particular part of the home lot and must therefore be justified still further.

It is certain, then, that the spot which the tablet indicates is the traditional site for the house.

It is nearly certain that this traditional site of the house has never, in all the changes of the estate, been covered by any structure.

It is certain that there are still fragments of a wall and some other remains of stonework on that site, and we are of the opinion that what is there should be looked upon as the hearth of Roger Williams.

# I.

Roger Williams lived on the home lot of which this property was a part.

The home lot seems to have descended to Daniel Williams, and from him to his son, Roger.

In 1713, April 30th, Charles Dyer, in selling the lot north of this to Nathaniel Brown (D. B. II, P. 300) bounds south on the heirs of Daniel Williams. No interest of the other heirs of Roger Williams appears except in a deed from Benjamin Wright to Joseph Williams, son of Daniel, of the Throckmorton lot, next south, in which he bounds on the north with the heirs of Roger Williams, deceased. This was on June 2d, 1718. (D. B. IV, 20). On May 18th, 1723, Joseph Williams sells to Jabez Bowen, the physician, a corner, 40 by 80, from this Throckmorton lot (D. B. V, 331), and he bounds on the north on his brother Roger Williams. How Roger acquired the whole title we do not know.

Roger Williams by his deed of September 25th, 1742 (D. B. XI, 10), sells to Jabez Bowen a strip ten feet wide and eighty feet deep on the north side of the latter's homestead, and he says it is a part of his grandfather's home lot.

Finally by deed of July 25th, 1748 (D. B. XII, 261), Roger Williams sells to Nehemiah Sprague, a lot 40 by 60, west on Town street, and this land he says, "is the northwest corner of that lot that was my Hon. Grandfather Roger Williams whereon he dwelt." The north line of the deeded land was the north line of the home lot.

This is direct and positive evidence. It only remains to show that this lot, sold in 1748, is a part of the property before us.

For this 40 by 60 lot did not include all of the present estate. On July 13th, 1754, Roger Williams sold to his son-in-law, Jonathan Tourtellot, a strip four feet wide on the south of this lot and a piece 44 by 80 on the east or up-hill side of it. (D. B. XIII, 379.)

In the meantime Nehemiah Sprague had, on December 28th, 1748 (D. B. XII, 262), sold to Simeon Hunt the old 40 by 60 lot on the Town street, and Simeon Hunt, October 25th, 1749 (D. B. XII, 308), transferred the land to Joseph Owen.

Owen probably built his house soon after on this front lot. On July 19th, 1754 (D. B. XIII, 389), he bought of Jonathan Tourtellot, the lot eastward of his own with the four foot gangway strip. This was just six days after Tourtellot's deed from Williams.

It is on this rear lot that it is claimed the old house had stood. We now have the lot complete, and, except for some diminutions, as it is now.

Roger Williams, March 6th, 1755, deeded to David Thayer, his son-in-law, all the rest of the home lot. (D. B. XV, 74.)

On August 13th of the same year, 1755, Joseph Owen received from Thayer the deed of a lot south of his original front lot, bounding 40 feet west on the Town street, and extending back 140 feet, the total depth of his other two lots. It is bounded north on Joseph Owen "where he now dwells." (D. B. XV, 53.)

Now, on November 17th, 1755 (D. B. XV, 65), Owen sold to Benjamin Bowen, son of his southern neighbor, Col. Jabez, a strip 13 feet wide and 140 feet long on the south side of his north lot, that is, right through his holding. This, though not in its present place exactly is the future Howland street.

Now let us go back to the lots north of Howland street, for they are our chief concern.

Joseph Owen sold, February 20th, 1761, the lot of land and dwelling house "where I now live" (D. B. XVI, 103), to Levi Whipple. More than half the gangway, now Howland street appears in this deed, but its location has shifted northward.

Levi Whipple sold to Joseph Hart, July 9th, 1762 (D. B. XVI, 201).

Joseph Hart mortgaged the property to John Dennie, of Boston, October 23d, 1762 (D. B. XVI, 204), and the mortgagee assigned to Devonshire and Reave of Bristol, England, from whom it came to Moses Brown (D. B. XIX,



419), who sold, November 25th, 1783, to Simeon Hunt Olney. (D. B. XIX, 419.)

From Joshua Newell and his wife, Olney had already, October 6th, 1783 (D. B. XIX, 424), bought their interest in the estate which they probably had in some way of inheritance from Joseph Hart.

From Olney the land went to his daughter, Anstis, wife of Samuel Brown. Brown sold April 9th, 1840, to James Hazard, a colored man who built the present house, (D. B. LXXV, 215).

Hazard sold August 4th, 1842, to Dr. Samuel B. Tobey, (D. B. LXXXIII, 231).

Tobey sold 1843, to Arba B. Dike, who sold in February, 1853, to Benjamin R. Almy, (D. B. LXXXIV, 232).

B. R. Almy sold to his brother, Humphrey Almy, whose heirs now hold the property.

## II.

This is the traditional site of Roger Williams' house.

In a letter dated July 17th, 1819, printed in the *Rhode Island American* of July 20th, 1819, Wheeler Martin, discussing the location of the grave and of the house of Williams quotes Capt. Nathaniel Packard as follows:

“Capt. Nathaniel Packard told me that when he was a boy he used to play in a cellar which had a large peach tree in it, which cellar was situated on a lot back of the house built by Thomas (he meant Joseph) Owen, father of



the late Honorable Daniel Owen, afterwards owned by Levi Whipple, and now owned by the heirs of the late Simeon H. Olney, directly north of the house owned by Ezra Hubbard, and near where an outbuilding now stands.”

This fixes the spot very nearly, for Packard owned, after 1767, the lot east of the one we are discussing. It also goes to prove that the deeds seem to show, that the house on the lot in the eighteenth century was built by Joseph Owen.

“The people at that time” continues Packard’s testimony, “called it Roger Williams’ cellar.” Packard, who lived from 1730 to 1801, was born and died, says Martin, in a small house on the west side of Main street just south of Philip Allen’s. In this the Tax List of 1798 agrees. Packard’s widow testified to much the same effect.

Again, Theodore Foster, in a letter to Williams Thayer, dated May 21st, 1819, and printed in the *Rhode Island American* of July 16th, the same year, says that Mrs. Mary Tripe told him on May 12th, 1813, that the foundations of Roger Williams’ house still remained, and she pointed it out to him from her house. In 1819 he says he could not find these ruins on his last visit to Providence.

About 1860 came Stephen Randall armed with these traditions, and perhaps similar ones from other sources, and he went to a certain spot and proceeded to dig. He found a fragment of wall, more or less, enough to satisfy him that he had uncovered the foundation of his ancestor’s house.

In 1867 the present stable on the estate was built. In digging for a drain at this time a piece of wall was cut through about in a line with the excavations of Mr. Randall.

It may seem strange that the house was pushed so far toward the north line of the old home lot. Why was it not in the middle?

The answer to this question is given by the location of the spring which still flows on the other side of the street. It was to be nearer this that the house was placed so far north. For the well belonging to the homestead still exists under the front door of the present house on North Main street, and this well was placed there either because it tapped the vein which feeds the famous spring, or because it was a spring in itself.

### III.

This land was always open. No house of any kind, large or small, ever stood upon it since the old house was destroyed.

This raises the question: when was the old house destroyed? We do not know. It seems probable, however, that it was burnt in one of the Indian attacks and that Roger Williams, who was then about 73 years old, did not rebuild, but went to live with his son Daniel, in the lower part of the Town street.

We infer the burning of Roger Williams' house from the accounts of contemporary historians who say that nearly

all the town was destroyed. Hubbard says that not above three houses were left standing. (*New and Further Narrative*, P. 13.) William Harris says: "The enemy hath burnt—all moste all in Providence." (*R. I. Hist. Coll.* X, 174.)

Daniel Williams, at what time and in what way is not known, obtained a home lot at the south end of the town between Nicholas Power on the north and William Hopkins on the south, that is to say, the second home share south of the present Power street, once the property of the widow, Jane Sears. On this lot he seems to have lived, and here we feel very certain that his father lived with him after the burning of his own home in 1676, and the death of his wife which Austin puts in the same year.

For, on the 24th of August, 1710, Daniel addressed a letter to the Town Purchasers in which he told them sundry things, and in which he said: "he gave away all so that he had nothing to help himself, so that he being not in a way to get for his supply and being ancient, it must needs pinch somewhere. I do not desire to say what I have done for both father and mother. I judge they wanted nothing that was convenient for ancient people &c." (*Knowles Memoir of Roger Williams*, p. 110. Original in Providence Town Papers.)

Let us now consider what evidence there may be on either side of the question whether another house was ever built on the site.

A. That the spot was empty.

a. No deed till 1755 speaks of a house on any part of the lot. As Joseph Owen bought the land in 1748 (that is the front 60 feet) it is to be assumed that he built a house soon after. Capt. Packard says he built a house there. Owen bought the back lot from Jonathan Tourtellot, July 13th, 1754 (13 : 379), and no house is mentioned. It was therefore clear at that date. The house referred to in the deed of 1755 was certainly on the front part of the lot.

b. Capt. Packard told Wheeler Martin that the spot was open and spoke as though it had always been. He expressly says it was behind the Owen house.

c. Mrs. Mary Tripe showed the ruins to Foster in 1813.

d. The tax list of 1798 says there were on the lot a wooden house of two stories, very old, a shop 14 by 20, and a wood house 13 by 10½. Not a collection likely to cover the whole of a lot 33½ by 140.

e. The tax list of 1814 mentions only a house.

B. That the spot was not empty.

a. In 1770 the house and land were held by Rev. David S. Rowland as a tenant of absentee landlords. He, as we know from a letter of Moses Brown, assignee of the mortgage held by these landlords, made valuable improvements. In 1779, when Levi Whipple, a former owner was there a tenant, there was a stable on the place which was very likely one of the improvements of the minister.

b. In Moses Brown's deed to Simeon H. Olney, this stable appears.

The location of this stable which does not appear in 1798, would, if we could absolutely fix it, prove or disprove our point. Now, the most probable location for the stable on this as on other estates, was the extreme back of the lot where the present stable is. If the stable had stood on what would naturally be the yard or garden and had thus covered the site of the ancient house, it would have cut the lot in two most awkwardly. Capt. Packard would have remembered the stable and so would Mrs. Tripe, if it had stood over the house and if they knew where the house was.

And they did know. Mr. Packard had played in the cellar. It is hard to imagine that, if that cellar had been covered in his time with a stable he would not have known it. Finally, it is possible that the old shop and the stable were the same. On the whole, it seems almost certain that the site was always open.

#### IV.

There are now on the site, below the surface, some fragments of wall and other stonework. Photographs of them are in the possession of the R. I. Historical Society for any one to examine. Mr. Almy testifies that the excavations are on the spot dug into by Mr. Stephen Randall.



Mr. Weston and I met Mr. A. L. Almy, the architect, one of the present owners, on September 18th, on the lot. Mr. Almy showed us the present arrangement and pointed out the place where when he was a boy he saw Mr. Randall dig, as well as the place where, in digging the drain, the workmen encountered the wall again. Mr. Weston and I, as a sub-committee charged with the placing of the tablet, thought we ought to check Mr. Randall's discoveries if we could. Mr. Almy agreed to allow any amount of digging and accordingly, a man who was obtained from Mr. Admas, the mason, was put to work on September 19th. We began about nine feet back from the bank and trenched westward. We soon struck wall, and continuing, unearthed a large flat stone. Turning north and south we laid bare a section of wall over three feet long and sixteen inches thick, standing eight or ten inches above the flat stone alluded to. More flat stones appeared, and traces of wall on the north were visible.

The work had to be done very carefully, much of it (on hands and knees) with a trowel and brush. We dug at the north in the line of the wall, but found nothing, though we went down in the sand which underlies the site to a point from which the sounding rod would reach hard pan. The wall had never extended in this direction. A search on the south was equally fruitless, as the drain excavation had evidently destroyed the wall at this point. Nothing was to be looked for on the west for the bank wall with the excavation for the yard had cut off everything.

Clay appeared in some of the joints of the wall on the inside. The outside seemed to be laid dry. Clay also appeared in the joints between the flat stones west of the wall, and a heap of clay was found lying upon these stones. It looked very much as if it had been put there, and appeared also under one of the stones as if used for mortar between it and the one below.

When the ruins were cleared, September 20th, we had them photographed from several different points of view. Measurements were taken of them, and they were located from the bank wall and from the lines of Howland street, and from North Main street. The grade of Howland street was also taken with a level and the height of the flat stone of the ruin was taken above a point on the curb at North Main Street.

## V.

These fragments, just described, are, in our opinion, the remains of the fireplace and the chimney of Roger Williams' house. The flat stones arranged as they are, the fragment of wall where the back of the chimney should be, with all the characteristics of such a chimney back, heat cracks and all, the trace of a jamb, faint though it be, on the north, all point to this conclusion.

When the house was burnt or otherwise destroyed, we believe the former, the chimney stood for some years as one near the state farm wall is still standing, as the King chimney is still, and as a chimney or more in various parts of the state are standing.



Bye and bye it fell, and as the upper parts went first the debris gradually covered the lower parts and protected them. After many years, with the ground unoccupied, as we have tried to show this was, there would be only a green mound, covered with weed or grass, troublesome to spade or plough, and hence left alone. Sentiment too may have had some effect even among our forefathers. Who knows? At any rate, there can be shown to any one who desires proof of this statement, the remnants of certain old stacks which have gone that way to destruction and are in the condition described.

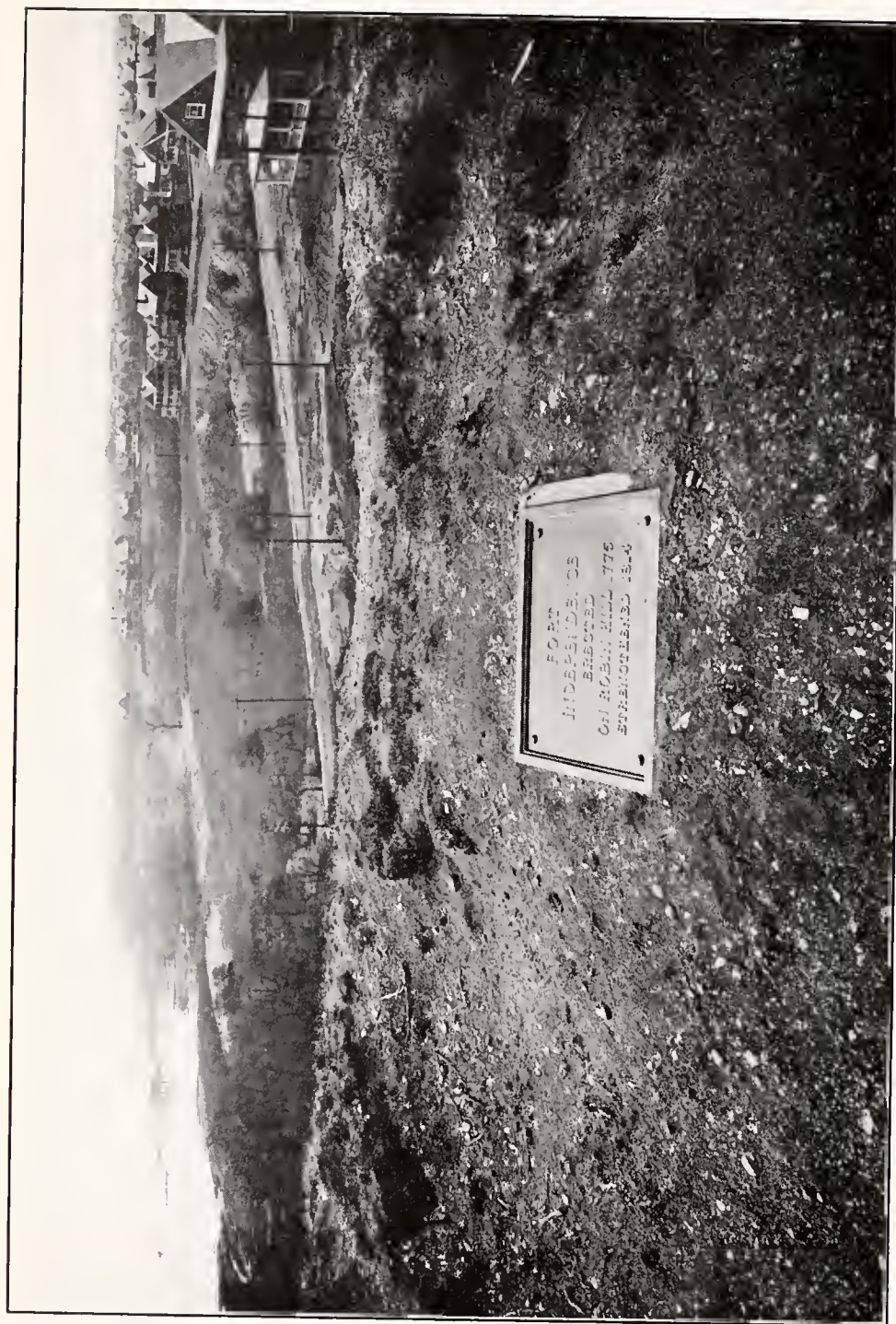
In conclusion, can we tell anything from our find as to the form and size of Roger Williams' house? The find simply strengthens the claim made in *Early R. I. Houses*, that the ancient houses of the town were like the Roger Mowry house, one room, story-and-a-half affairs, with a stone chimney at the end turned toward the hill. The fire room, lower room or hall, was 15 or 16 feet by 17, and about 6½ feet high. The roof was very steep. The foundation, as in this case was very shallow, and if there was a cellar under the house it was simply a hole with sloping sides, a place to keep potatoes from freezing, or what they had in place of potatoes, and reached either on the outside from the lower ground of the sloping hillside, or from within by a trap door. Most likely the latter, on account of prowling animals.

In concluding this report we have merely to say that we have attempted to set forth the results of an inquiry

into the claims of the traditional site of the house, and to give to the society the sources known to us, with the excavations we have made. What we think does not bind any one. The facts do. If any one therefore, objects to the reading of the sources and the excavation which we have set forth, we are glad to set before him the data we have had, so that he can, like a good Rhode Islander, form his own opinion.

NORMAN MORRISON ISHAM.





FORT INDEPENDENCE, FIELD'S POINT



## FORT INDEPENDENCE

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Paper read by C. S. Brigham

May 16, 1907

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The battle of Bunker Hill, on June 17, 1775, gave warning to the country that a long and exhausting conflict was at hand. Rhode Island in common with the other colonies immediately took steps to place herself upon a war footing and adopted such precautions as seemed expedient to guard against the incursions of the enemy. The town of Providence, easily approached by water, was open to attack from the British ships of war stationed at Newport. A beacon was ordered to be erected at the Providence town meeting of July 3, 1775, and was completed during the following month. At a meeting held on July 31st, it was ordered that fortifications should be built at Fox Point, and intrenchments "hove up between Fields and Sassafras Points of sufficient capacity to cover a body of men ordered there on any emergency."

The construction of the works at Fields Point was immediately begun. Solomon Drowne in a letter to his brother, William, dated August 12, 1775, says: "One day last week Mr. Compton, with one of the Light Infantry drummers and two of the Cadet fifers, went round to

notify the sons of freedom who had the public good and safety at heart to repair to Hacker's wharf, with such implements as are useful in intrenching, where a boat was ready to take them on board and transport them to the shore between Sassafras and Fields Point. About sixty of us went in a packet, many had gone before, some in J. Brown's boat, &c., so when all had got there the number was not much short of 200. I don't know that ever I worked harder a day in my life before. With what had been done by a number that went the day before, we threw up a breastwork that extended near one quarter of a mile. A large quantity of bread was carried down, and several were off catching quahaugs, which were cooked for dinner *à la mode de Indian*. The channel runs at not a great distance from this shore so that when cousin Wallace comes up to fire our town, his men who work the ship can easily be picked down by small arms, from our intrenchment, which is designed principally for musqueteers." (Field Revolutionary Defences in R. I. p. 57.)

Corroborating the information contained in this letter, there is a bill rendered by William Compton, the town sergeant, containing this item: "August 2, to warning the town to work on fortifications,—4—0." A notice regarding the beacon printed in the Gazette of August 12, 1775, mentions the fact that "a strong battery, and intrenchment on the river" have been erected. The Providence Gazette of August 26 reports on August 22, when some British ships-of-war came up the Bay, the





THESE EARTHWORKS  
WERE THROWN UP  
IN 1775  
AND STRENGTHENED  
IN 1814



inhabitants manned the battery at Fox Point and "an intrenchment on the River." These intrenchments were evidently erected on the brow of the bluff overlooking the river and extended from Sassafras Point toward Fields Point. There is little now remaining except the breastworks at the northernmost extremity of the line and it is this redoubt, strengthened during the War of 1812, that is marked to-day.

The intrenchments near Sassafras Point were intended largely for riflemen. A fort of somewhat more pretentious size was required to guard the approach to Providence. At a town meeting held October 26, 1775, a committee was appointed "to direct where, and in what manner, fortifications shall be made upon the hill to the southward of the house of William Field." This old house, the ancestral home of the Fields, was demolished in 1896.

At this same town meeting of October 26, it was voted "that the part of the town below the Gaol Lane (Meeting street), on the east side of the river, be required by warrant from the town clerk, as usual, by beat of drum, to repair to-morrow morning at 8 o'clock, to Fields Point, to make proper fortifications there; to provide themselves with tools and provisions for the day, that the inhabitants capable of bearing arms, who dwell on the west side of the river, be required in the same manner to repair thither, for the same purpose, on Saturday next; and that the inhabitants of that part of the town to the northward of the Gaol Lane, be required, in the same manner, to repair thither for the same purpose on Monday next."

The towns surrounding Providence contributed their assistance. In the Gazette of November 4, 1775, a notice was published requesting the inhabitants of Cranston, Johnston and North Providence to aid in completing the fortifications.

The erecting of this fort was superintended by Barnard Eddy, and his bill to the town, still preserved in the records, shows the date of the fort's construction.

Town of Providence to Barnard Eddy

1775

November 20 to 1½ days work William Field

72 hands & his team at 12s per day . . . . . 0 18 0

To Boards & Other Stuff to mend Wheale

Barers and mack hand Barers . . . . . 0 8 0

To 7 Days Work by William Field attendance on the men at the fortification at

¼ per day . . . . . 61 13 6

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2 19 6

To 1 day of Joseph Eddy in going to Johnston for the Spars . . . . . 0 4 6

To 24 days for myself from of November at 5s per day . . . . . 6 0 0

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9 4 0

Erors Excepted

Barnard Eddy

To 7 Spars of Obediah Brown for the Boam. . 12 —1

To 7 do of Samuel Winsor at 15s per ton 41 feet . . . . . —15 4½

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10 11 5½

Barnard Eddy

The charges for boom and spars evidently relate to the boom and chain which was ordered to be stretched across the river at Fields Point as an obstruction to vessels entering the harbor.

The hill upon which this fort was erected was called, possibly at that time, but surely within a few years later, Robin Hill. A plat of the William Field property, now in the City Record Office, dated 1816, shows the outline of the fort and calls it "Robin Hill Fort." The name, Fort Independence, by which recent generations have known the work, was evidently fastened upon it by later map-makers, somewhere about the middle of the 19th century. A writer in the Providence Press of August 7, 1869, in referring to the fort as a relic of the War of 1812, says: It is located "on Robin Hill, and is now called Fort Independence. An old gentleman now living in the city, who helped to construct some of the works, says it was originally called Fort Robin Hill. When or why the name was changed, it is impossible to say."

In the War of 1812, the various fortifications at Fields Point were much strengthened and improved. The first action in this regard was taken on September 19, 1814, when a large meeting of the citizens of Providence was held in the State House Parade for the purpose of taking concerted measures of defence against invasion. A committee of defence was appointed to supervise the construction of such fortifications as were deemed necessary. The military companies, the "gentlemen of the



bar," the masonic fraternity, the students at Brown University, the clergymen, the "people of color" and various other classes of citizens contributed their services. Within a fortnight earthworks were being thrown up in various quarters of the city. The newspapers of the day teem with notices for the prosecution of the work, and the original volume of records of the committee of defence, still preserved in the Historical Society, shows how strenuously the citizens worked to guard the town against invasion. The State, however, was never threatened, and the treaty of Ghent was signed before the fortifications were completed.

It is related by a writer in the Providence Press of August 7th, 1869, that the fort at Robin Hill was constructed by the United Train of Artillery, with the aid of citizens, and that a public procession headed by two clergymen of the city, Rev. Henry Edes, and Rev. J. Willson, marched out of the city to the site chosen for the work. The fort at the southeastern extremity of Fields Point, now called Fort William Henry, was erected at this time, and was the most pretentious of any then constructed.

It is very fitting that these two Revolutionary forts should be thus marked, before the lapse of further years destroys our memory of them or alters the correctness of their traditions. So little do we of the present generation realize that the events of our own day are to be with the passing of years the events of the forgotten past and that facts familiar to us are to become the theme of research



for the future antiquarian and historian. Likewise the participants in the stirring days of the Revolution and the War of 1812 seldom seemed aware of the fact that they were makers of history. Had they realized this point, they would have provided us with more definite information as to the origin of the names of these very forts which we are marking. They would not have obliged us to resort to out of the way sources to gleam our array of facts and even then come away but partly satisfied. They would not have caused some of us err in placing Robin Hill at Sassafras Point instead of in its proper location as a hill identical with Fort Independence. Our ancestors have much to answer for. Let us attempt by the preservation in bronze of these historic sites to provide a partial remedy that we may not be accused by posterity of the same charge.

CLARENCE S. BRIGHAM.

## REYNOLDS HOUSE, BRISTOL

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Historical Address Delivered by Judge O. L. Bosworth at Ceremonies  
Attending the Placing of Tablet on House Occupied by  
Gen. Lafayette in 1778

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*Mr. President, and members of the Rhode Island Historical  
Society, Ladies and Gentlemen:—*

To-day the scenes and events of one hundred and twenty eight years ago, come vividly before us—scenes stirring with romance, yet of the deepest significance and importance in our national history.

This ancient domicile, its architecture peculiar to early New England, its quaint rooms, and more especially the room once occupied by him whose name to-day we honor, a name familiar throughout the length and breadth of our land, has an interest and charm known only to him who loves New England and her institutions.

In September, 1778, a long-limbed, lean, lanky young man with a hook-nose, red hair and retreating forehead, so shy as to be almost ungainly, and so quiet as to be almost awkward, might be seen making his way to this house. His eye was bright and sharp, his look when interested was firm and high, and beneath his unattractive exterior lay an intelligence that denoted thought and mental capacity, and a heart stirred with high ideals of right and



LAFAYETTE'S HEADQUARTERS, THE REYNOLDS HOUSE, BRISTOL





justice for the benefit of his fellowmen. This young man was Monseigneur Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert, Damotier de Lafayette, son of a noble gentleman who six weeks before the birth of our hero, was killed while charging an English battery at Mindeu. At the time of the birth of Lafayette the estates of his parents has become so depleted as to be insufficient to keep up the dignity of his family, or even to give him the education necessary to his rank and station.

The date of his birth was September 6th, 1757, and the place was upon one of the green slopes of the Avergne Mountains in Southern France, in the fortified manor-house known as the Chateau of Chivaniac. Here in this old country mansion, half castle and half farm-house, which had withstood the ravages of time and tempest for nearly six hundred years, was born the boy destined to know but little else than the tempest of Revolution. As a youth the want of means appeared for a time to be a serious obstacle to the advancement of his ambition, or even to the securing of an education suited to his rank and station. At this point rich and influential relatives came to the aid of his mother and he was sent to school at Paris to begin his education as a gentleman of rank. Thus it would seem Lafayette, born in the midst of revolution and poverty, commenced his career a soldier by birth, a scholar by charity.

In the year 1770 he suffered by death the loss of his mother, which was to him a great misfortune.

In the same year, however, the death of a grand-uncle gave him possession of a large estate, thus relieving his financial difficulties and placing in his hands the means of being more useful to his fellowmen, as the use of that income in later years proved. He was now a very rich and powerful nobleman with a future apparently as promising and happy as could be desired. His relatives and guardians now began when he was thirteen to arrange for him a suitable matrimonial alliance and finally the daughter of the Duke d'Ayen, a noble and wealthy peer of the realm was selected, and at the age of fourteen Lafayette was married to Mademoiselle Marie Adrienne Françoise de'Noailles, a girl of twelve. This proved a happy union, and this bride of twelve years became a comfort and support to him, even when the shadows of life and of the prison of Olmutz had gathered darkly around him.

At this period we find Lafayette young and wealthy, with a royal lineage, connected by a happy marriage with a powerful and wealthy family, and apparently with all that youth and wealth can give planning for the welfare and liberty of mankind. He is uneasy and anxious and he feels the impulse of destiny. He has listened to the story of the Duke of Gloucester at a dinner with the French Commandment at Metz, has heard in that story that the peasants in America had had a fight with British soldiers at a place called Lexington and Concord, and that these peasants were of the lower order who needed the strong hand to put them down; and then



and there he anxiously questioned the Duke as to who these rebel peasants were, and why they were in rebellion, and the Duke explained as best he could what was the cause of the trouble, and added that though "the peasants of America are a plucky lot, still as all the gentlemen of the colonies seemed to be loyal to the King, the peasants had no chance of success unless by some chance leaders and officers of experience turned in and helped them." The heart and soul of Lafayette had now become enlisted in the cause of freedom, and it soon became known that he intended to go to America to fight for those whom Duke of Gloucester had been pleased to call "American peasants." To use his own words "I could think of nothing but this enterprise and I resolved to go to Paris at once to make further inquiries."

This information came to the ears of his father-in-law, who used every means in his power to prevent his son-in-law from going to America, but without success. Lafayette was now thoroughly aroused to what he felt his duty to the people of America and he resolved at the risk of his life and fortune to aid them in their struggle for liberty against the strongest nation of the world. To this end he sought and obtained an interview with Silas Deane and Benjamin Franklin, who were then our American agents at Paris. At this interview he told them of his willingness to aid their cause and said, "I am going to buy a ship to take your officers and supplies to America in it. It is precisely in time of danger that I wish to share whatever

fortune may have in store for you.” This he set about at once and purchased a small sloop named “Victory.” In this he sailed from Bordeaux, but without necessary papers, and after many adventures, in spite of remonstrances of his father-in-law and friends, and in spite of the King of France, steered for America.

On the twenty-seventh of July, Lafayette and his companions, one of them being Baron de Kalb, arrived in Philadelphia and assuming that their troubles were over, started to wait upon the President of Congress with their letters of introduction from Silas Deane and Benjamin Franklin.

As the Congress was unwilling to give the two officers the major generals commission they had asked for Lafayette with that determination of purpose and with that consistency to our cause which ever characterized him as a soldier and as a friend of Washington said, “If Congress will not accept me as a Major General, behold! I will fight for American liberty as a volunteer.”

He then wrote a letter to Congress setting out his desire to be of service to America, requesting that he be allowed to serve as a volunteer without pay. That was a most unusual request and proposition, and Hancock and Congress were surprised and most favorably impressed with the young nobleman and his lofty sentiments, and on the first day of July, 1777, Lafayette at the age of nineteen was appointed by Congress as Major General in the army of the United State. He now requested to be allowed to

serve near Washington, but Washington did not look with favor upon a young French nobleman, who was only a boy and who had run away from home. When he learned, however, of Lafayette's offer and determination to serve the cause without pay, he was interested in him and desired to see and know him better. Washington seemed to have seen at once the sterling traits of his character, and the making of a leader of great value to the American cause, for he at once invited Lafayette to join his staff as a volunteer aid, and to make his headquarters his home. Lafayette was now anxious to see service and the opportunity soon came in the attempt by Washington to check the advance of General Howe, Cornwallis and Knyphausen at Brandywine. Here in this, the first battle in which Lafayette was engaged, he received his baptism of fire and blood. Here he was wounded and here too he showed he was worthy of all that Deane and Franklin had said of him or all that Washington had hoped. Plunging into the thickest of the fight he threw himself from his horse and with sword in hand bravely attempted to check the Hessian advance and stem the tide of battle, but numbers often outweigh valor, and finally Lafayette was obliged when night came on to fall back. In this action he was wounded, but such was his interest and intense anxiety that he did not know it until after the battle. The gallant manner in which the young Marquis behaved in this engagement won for him commendation and praise, and when Washington wrote to Congress his

account of the battle, he mentioned the bravery and ability of Marquis de Lafayette.

On the recommendation of Washington he was by Congress appointed to the command of the Virginia division on December 4th, 1777,—a Major General in active command at twenty-two.

Early in May, 1778, an event happened which had been long looked for and most earnestly sought for by every true American, armed interference in the affairs of America and a treaty of commerce and alliance with France. For this Lafayette had in France and in this country worked long and earnestly. This alliance it would seem, when we consider the condition of our army, our finances and the reverses which had just previously befallen the colonies, was the one thing necessary to sustain our waning struggle for independence. Who shall say what would have been our fate had not the French come to our relief? Who can estimate the services of Lafayette to bring about this result? Is it unfair or unreasonable to at least say that Lafayette may have been the indirect influence that gave us the victory over our enemies in our struggle for liberty?

This intelligence sent sunshine throughout the gloom of Valley Forge. The British now in an attempt to fall back upon New York gave opportunity for Lafayette to again display his quickness and decision in military maneuvers. Generals Howe and Clinton planned for the capture of the Marquis and felt sure of success. They considered that



his capture would have great weight in Europe, and the plan came near fulfillment. He was practically surrounded by the three divisions of the English army. Lafayette by maneuvering his troops so as to give the appearance of forming his whole army in battle, deceived the British into preparing for a general engagement, and while they were forming for the battle he slipped away across the Schuylkill with his whole army without the loss of a man. Washington was delighted with Lafayette's timely and handsome retreat, which he considered victory for the Marquis.

The next morning it was found that the British had stolen away in the night. The honors of this important engagement were with Washington and Lafayette. Lafayette now was sent with two thousand men to march overland from the Hudson to Providence to support the French naval attack which it was thought would be made at Newport, but the French fleet sailed away without engaging the British.

At this time while the British were in possession of Rhode Island, Lafayette, with Generals Sullivan and Greene, was ordered to expel the British from the state, and it was while engaged in this work that Lafayette made his headquarters in this house. No better account of his sojourn here can be found than that given by Professor Munro in his *Story of the Mount Hope Lands*. He writes: "In September, 1778, Lafayette took the command of the ports about the Island of Rhode

Island. His principal corps was stationed at Bristol. He was intrusted with the care of Warren, Bristol and the eastern shore, as he himself writes to General Washington in a letter dated 'Camp near Bristol, September 7. 1778.' Another letter is dated 'Bristol near Rhode Island.' On the 27th of September he writes, 'I have removed my station from Bristol and am in a safer place behind Warren.' During his stay in this town, the Marquis lived in the house of Joseph Reynolds, upon Bristol Neck. Mrs. Reynolds the great-grandmother of the present owner of the house, had been informed of the approach of her noble guest, and had made suitable preparations for his reception. More than an hour before the time which had been appointed for his coming, a young Frenchman rode up to the house, and dismounting, tied his horse to a tree which stood near it. Plainly, one of the general's attendants, thought Mrs. Reynolds, and her negro servant, Cato, was at once sent to conduct him to the room designed for the subordinate officers. The young man expressed a desire for something to eat, and he was accordingly seated at the table which had been prepared for his commander, though his hostess wondered greatly that he could not control his appetite until a more appropriate hour. The officer ate very heartily of the dinner that was placed before him, but sat so long at the table that Mrs. Reynolds was forced to address him, and to remind him that his general was momentarily expected, when, to her intense amazement, the young man announced that he was the visitor



whose arrival the household were so eagerly awaiting.” Lafayette then went to Boston to induce Count d’Estaing to assist the army at Newport—this the Count promised to do, but the British being heavily reinforced, Lafayette was obliged to go hastily back to lead the army out of danger, which he did with his accustomed vigorous and strategical manner. Now feeling that his services for a time were needed in France, he asked for a leave of absence, and he was by Congress granted a furlough with its official thanks and the gift of an elegant sword, and Lafayette was ordered carried by the best warship of our navy to France.

He did not, although entertained, admired and flattered at home lose sight of the American cause and commenced to plan an attack by France and Spain on English ports and cities in aid of America. In this he was joined by Benjamin Franklin and John Paul Jones; but the failure of Spain to do her part crippled the expedition and it was finally given up, but defeat of the plan where the liberty of America was in the balance, did but discourage or dampen the ardor of this young Marquis whose life and soul seemed to be enlisted in our cause. His influence was now exerted to obtain help for us and his persistency finally carried the day. This effort was one the the masterly moves of Lafayette, and France, through his influence dispatched a fleet and army to our assistance.

This did much towards our final triumph, and in this Lafayette deserves full credit, for he had obtained for us aid against even the royal will, without which we may

never have been a nation. In July, 1780, Count de Rochambeau arrived at Newport, and announced to Washington that he was under his command.

Lafayette and Knox now met Count de Rochambeau and a plan of operations was formed. Lafayette was then sent to drive out the British from Virginia, and the French fleet was to support him but failed, being driven back by the British.

Lafayette was now obliged to carry out his land operations unaided, and was so successful that Benedict Arnold, the traitor, and General Phillips were driven back. Cornwallis was much annoyed by Lafayette's maneuvers and he determined to capture, as he called him, "that boy Lafayette."

Lafayette had maneuvered so well that Cornwallis found himself entrapped and hemmed in by the arrival of the combined forces of Washington and Rochambeau.

The American and French army aided by the navy of France now sat down to besiege the British defences at Yorktown. Lafayette had accomplished his desires. He had protected Virginia, forced Cornwallis into a corner and held him there until the allied armies arrived. The closing scenes of the American Revolution were now near at hand and here at the close of the long struggle he displayed that magnanimity and nobility of character which had always been the crowning glory of his life, for when Cornwallis was so penned in that his downfall and capture was certain, the French Admiral proposed that he and Lafayette go in and finish up Cornwallis, but Lafayette

ever faithful to Washington, waited until he arrived, thus giving to Washington the honor and glory of the closing event and final victory, when he might have taken it, at least in a great measure, to himself. Cornwallis surrendered, and there ended one of the greatest dramas of the world's history, in which Lafayette was a star actor and one of the central figures. It was the last battle of the American Revolution and it was won by Lafayette's fighters and under his personal direction.

Congress now felt that Lafayette's presence in France was more necessary to the same cause than even his services here, for it was not known that King George would at this point ask for peace, and the young Marquis went back to the land of his nativity to continue his labor of love for liberty and America.

He continued his work in France and even was made Chief of Staff in another formidable expedition against the British power in America, but he never again was called upon to fight the English, for peace came to us on the third of September, 1783. Even after this, Lafayette continued his labors for our country and did what he could to bring the affairs of America to a successful conclusion in France. But the interests of his people claimed his attention, for the slumbering fires of revolution soon became manifest in France. Here we leave our hero, our friend, our Lafayette, to continue in France his fight for freedom and mankind, for it was with deep-seated love for liberty that lead him to take up the cause of the oppression in our struggle for freedom, and in the great and tragic events soon to transpire in the French Revolution.

The question is often asked: Was Lafayette great? Whatever claim he had to greatness came from long steady, persistent and unselfish devotion to liberty. Instead of the imaginary republic of Plato or the Eutopia of Sir Thomas More, he took for his model that government and those principles that gives to mankind the greatest happiness and the highest life.

He seemed to have in mind as the all absorbing ambition of his life the liberty of America and France—the two nations which became the most prominent and important republics of the world. Events and efforts which seem trifling, oftentimes shape and control the destiny of nations, as well as men, and if the “French Alliance” was necessary to the success of our arms in our struggle for independence (a conclusion to which it would seem the student of history must come) and if Lafayette who worked unremittingly for that alliance, brought it to a successful issue, then if great results from human efforts confer greatness, Lafayette was indeed great, for he would then be the instrument by and through which we attained our independence. But however that may be, few men have as indelibly stamped their names on the pages of history. He possessed in the highest degree the true principles of altruism. Few, if any names of history are recorded showing such untiring devotion and generosity as he manifested in the struggle for our independence, and for the freedom of mankind, to which he pledged his life, his fortune and his sacred honor.

ORRIN L. BOSWORTH.







THE SWAMP FIGHT GRAVE, BABBITT FARM, WICKFORD

## THE MEMORIAL OF THE MEN WHO DIED IN THE SWAMP FIGHT

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Address by Norman M. Isham

June 15, 1907

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A rock on the spot which saw the very beginnings of English Narragansett now bears a bronze tablet marking the site of the grave of the Swamp Fight Soldiers. The purpose of this paper is to show how we know that these colonial warriors do actually rest where the state, with the enduring metal has placed their memorial.

The South County has kept an unbroken line of verbal testimony handed down from father to son about the Great Grave on the Updike farm.

We have also contemporary written evidence of the burial, a direct statement in a letter of Captain James Oliver sent from Narragansett a little over a month after the battle.

In regard to the return march, which was so fatal to the wounded, we have, again, this letter of Captain Oliver, and others written by the Rev. Joseph Dudley, one of the chaplains in the Massachusetts force. There is also a statement made some years later by Colonel Church, and a petition for relief made in 1703 by John Bool, a Massachu-

setts soldier, who, like Church, was one of the wounded carried that night to the garrison.

These are the foundations of all our knowledge of the events we are to discuss. They are the statements of eyewitnesses. To them may be added Major Bradford's letter from the Newport hospital and the material in the archives of the colonies.

Another class of evidence is that given by the historians of the time. It is very valuable, but though much of it was no doubt derived at first hand from eyewitnesses, it has not the same weight as the testimony of the actors, for we can not always tell how much of it is so derived and how much is not.

Let us now see whether from all this evidence we can not make a picture of that dreadful night march and of the burial of the dead, showing by absolute proof that forty men were buried at Narragansett, and by a close approximation to certainty that the grave was near the rock which we have marked.

The Colonial army left the field of the Swamp Fight about sundown, that is to say, about after half-past four, on Sunday, December 19, 1675, the December 30 of our modern calendar.

In what condition was the army when the trumpeters sounded the recall and the depleted companies were formed on the upland near the northern edge of the swamp?

About one thousand men had gone into the action between one and two o'clock. Of these about 500, in

six companies and one troop, were from Massachusetts; about three hundred, in five companies, with 150 Mohegans and Pequots, from Connecticut; and about 150, in two companies, from Plymouth. Some Rhode Island men were attached to them as volunteers. The force was not organized as a regiment, but as what we should call a brigade. Each colonial quota might be called a regiment, but there were few regimental officers and the highest in command of any colony's troops was a major, who except in the case of Connecticut, was also captain of the leading company. This idea may be found in the organization of our Revolutionary army.

The command-in-chief was held by Josiah Winslow, of Plymouth, with the rank of General. Major Robert Treat, leader of the Connecticut force, said to have been the last man to leave the fort, as John Raymond, of Middleboro, claimed to have been the first man in, was the second in command.

The troopers, and perhaps all the officers, wore corslets. Whether buff coats were worn by all, it is not easy to say. Captain Davenport certainly had one. Rev. Mr. Dudley, in his letter asks for "blunderbusses, and hand grenadoes and armor, if it may, and at least two armourers to mend arms."

Each man, except the troopers who were armed with short guns, possibly blunderbusses, carried a long musket with a flint lock, and all wore swords, though ten men from each Connecticut county wore hatchets instead for



side arms. A bandoleer, like a modern cartridge belt over the shoulder, carried the powder for the guns in separate charges. The priming powder was carried in a horn.

The Rev. Mr. Dudley, in his letter reporting the battle, says: "after our wounds were dressed we drew up for a march." Hubbard, the historian of the war, says that they returned to quarters before their wounds could be dressed. He also says, however, that the dead and wounded were carried out of the fort as they fell. The care of the wounded, then, must have been continuous and Dudley must have referred to the last work done upon the newly injured and upon the others in getting them ready to move.

There were four surgeons with the army, Dr. Daniel Weld of Salem, surgeon-in-chief, and the regimental surgeons, Richard Knott of Marblehead for Massachusetts, Matthew Fuller of Barnstable for Plymouth, and Rev. Gershom Bulkeley of Wethersfield for Connecticut. This gave one surgeon for every fifty-two of the injured, or, if we omit those killed outright, one to every forty-eight. This provision certainly was intended to be ample, but it may be doubted if it sufficed in the fierce cold and storm when the numbness of the surgeons' hands must have been a terrible hindrance, even if there were fires to keep them warm.

Nor are we to suppose that the surgeons' knowledge was, for those days at all inadequate. For the heavy mortality we must blame the professional equipment and also the



professional prejudices then common to the world. The heaviest charge against the doctors is that made by Church that one of them, at least, was so anxious to get away from the Swamp that he would let Church bleed to death like a dog if he continued to advise General Winslow to occupy the fort. The mortality on the retreat is a terrible refutation of the reasons this surgeon gave for making it.

The army left several dead in the fort—Captain Oliver says eight. Ninigret, according to Major Bradford's letter to Mr. Cotton, sent in word that his men had buried about twenty-four English, and that he wanted a charge of powder for each, which makes his count a little suspicious, in view of the care Oliver seems to have taken, especially as Joshua Tift, "Hatchet Tift" I think your tradition calls him, said that five or six English dead were found, on one of whom, curiously enough, was a pound and a half of powder. This does not look as if the bodies were abandoned because of fire. Hubbard gives some ground for the suggestion which has been made that these dead were left in the fort to deceive the Indians as to the English loss. None of the eyewitnesses speak of any such motive, and the leaving of the powder on one of the dead rather tells against an artifice which suggests a low estimate of Indian cunning. The strongest argument in favor of it is the wrath which it perhaps stirred in Connecticut some of whose men may have been left to the wild beasts or the mercies of Ninigret. For, in the commission to Major Talcott, May 26, 1676, the seventh article

reads: "Allsoe that you endeavoure to bury your slaine, if any be, and see your wounded well dressed by the chirurgions." There were to be no more of Mosely's cold and snowy retreats.

Twelve dead they took with them, says Oliver—no doubt the Captains Davenport, Johnson, Gardiner, Gallup and Marshall, with seven others, to us unknown, who must have been important men. Who were those left in the fort we do not know. As the returns of the dead in the Massachusetts Records mention some servants, probably sent out in place of their impressed masters, we might assume that they made up the eight. They would in any case be men whose unimportance in the minds of the Puritan aristocrats justified the leaving of them. If we could only assume the more charitable view that these men were inaccessible because of the fire among the wigwams we could account for Ninigret's twenty-four as well as for Oliver's eight, for a mistake could easily have been made in the confusion. All that destroys our illusion is the peculiarly positive statement of Oliver and the powder story of Joshua Tift.

However it may have been, with twelve important dead and nearly two hundred wounded, some of them mortally, the army fell in and began the retreat. Captain Oliver says the dead and wounded numbered two hundred and ten. Consider this proportion for a moment. One thousand men, we will say, went into the fight. Now here are eight hundred ready to march away with one-fourth

their number of dead and disabled—one dead or wounded man, that is, to every four able-bodied soldiers, if we are to call them able who had been marching and fighting since five o'clock in the morning with no food but what they could eat on the march, and upon whom a stormy night of almost zero weather was closing in. No wonder Dudley said two days later: "Our dead and wounded are two hundred, disabled as many."

Then, if these two hundred men were actually carried on stretchers by their half-frozen comrades it took four men to each helpless burden. Yet out of the eight hundred we must take the guard assigned to the General and his staff, as also the necessary "Forelorns, front guard and rereward" as they were called. Those one hundred and fifty Mohegans who possibly did much of this scouting and rear work, did they carry any wounded but their own? If we believe Captain Oliver they had been treacherous in the fight and had fired high, but had got great store of plunder, guns and kettles. They must have been well loaded with these on that cold night. These exceptions would reduce the available carrying force nearly to three men for every one carried. This is evidently impossible. Then, too, if they had several hundred prisoners, as Oliver, but as other contemporary, reports, who kept guard over those?

Again the testimony is that it had been snowing and that the storm was still raging. The anonymous letter to London says it snowed the night before, all that Sunday,

and all the night of the retreat. The author says the snow was two or three feet deep. It may have been in northern Massachusetts, but hardly so in Narragansett. All agree that it was very cold. We can well believe this, for the swamp was frozen so that men could cross it.

Now I do not believe that there ever lived three men, or even four who could carry a dead or wounded man seventeen miles on such a night through deep snow, constantly increasing, and do it on foot with a twelve pound gun, a knapsack, a sword or hatchet and what was left of the powder and bullets with which they had been provided.

How then did they go?

They returned from the Swamp as they had gone thither, on horseback. That is to say, it seems to me almost certain that, aside from the troopers of the one company of regular horse, who from an old English idea of the superior gentility of such service chose to take the field as cavalry, the soldiers of the Swamp Fight campaign, those we have always looked upon as foot, were, to use the old expression, "mounted as dragoons," were men who fought, indeed, on foot, but who moved about on horseback. They were drilled not in cavalry tactics, but in those of the infantry; they used their horses not for fighting, but for locomotion; they were equipped not as cavalry with the long sword as the principal weapon, but as infantry with the long-barreled musket as their chief arm.

All the Connecticut troops in the previous campaigns had, as the records show, been dragoons. It seems



unlikely that any change would be made in this expedition which had to cover such long distances. Nor is it to be supposed that men who about their own affairs always rode, and who had ridden in the Valley campaigns could be induced to walk from Hartford to Narragansett in winter, leaving their horses at home.

In a later campaign also, Major Talcott was ordered to "see to the preservation" of his "army, both man and horse."

The Plymouth soldiers who came up to Rehoboth in pursuit of Philip after the Mount Hope campaign had horses.

In Massachusetts, too, dragoons had been employed. Captain Henschman, early in the war was ordered to lead out a company mounted as dragoons. The soldiers went to the fight at Turner's Falls on horseback, and, it must be said, were glad to get away in the same manner. Captain Thomas Savage was sent to Mount Hope "with sixty horse, and as many Foot" . . . . "having prest horses for the footmen, and six carts to carry provisions."

Carts can hardly be imagined at the Swamp Fight, though they came to Smith's Garrison—by the way, the Connecticut troops impressed carts at New London, did they leave them at Pettaquamscutt or send them on to Smith's?—but baggage horses there were in plenty. We know this from the directions of the Connecticut Council of War, which ordered, in regard to the one



hundred and ten men to be raised in Hartford County that “. . . the commanders are to haue each of them a horss, and euery three soldiers a horss between them.” They also commanded Major Treat, November 27, 1675, “to make ye best of his way by water or land” (from New Haven and Fairfield Counties) “to New London . . . and if by land, then euery commission officer to haue a horss to himselfe, and euery three soldiers to haue a horss between them.” Miss Caulkins says the army came to New London by land. From the records it is evident the Hartford men did so, and Major Treat, we may believe, was willing to go by the same way in order to secure the horses which would be so useful to him later on.

In Massachusetts the evidence for the possession of baggage horses is not so clear, though that the officers wanted them for themselves and their men is perfectly plain. The Captains petitioned the Council asking how many horses would be allowed the officers at the public charge. The answer was, three to each company. They asked how many for the men “for Cariage of Lugage and transporting souldiers over Rivers on occasion,” and there is no reply at hand. As it seems to have been a question of public or private expense we may think that the worthy Council meant that men who did not want their feet wet should take their own horses, a way out of the difficulty which was possibly open to them. However, as the Massachusetts records show that horses were ordered, one hundred and even one hundred and fifty at a time to carry baggage

and provisions to the rendezvous in later campaigns it follows either that they had learned from Connecticut or that they regularly, and hence on this campaign also, allowed their men the animals at the public or at private expense.

On these horses, which had been picketed on the upland during the fight, the men put their baggage and such of the wounded as could ride. Those who were more severely injured may have been slung each in a blanket between two of the animals.

Now let us turn our backs upon the battle field and with the wearied soldiery address ourselves to the march. Daylight was almost gone. It was snowing—"not able to abide the field in the storm" writes Dudley—but the blaze of the burning wigwams must still have lit up the savage scene. The writer in the *Old Indian Chronicle* says they marched three miles by the light of the conflagration! Upon which Mr. Drake, the editor, suggests that the reader may need to reinforce his credulity. It does seem a large story, as the latest historians of the war remark, but I think a light other than the literal one referred to is cast by it upon the retreat. If it is true, it follows that, once out of the swamp, which may well have been on fire also, the country was fairly open—that the South County was not heavily timbered throughout as we are apt to imagine all New England was in the earliest days. There were numerous Indian clearings and much of the land was empty. In fact, as good Governor Winthrop

described it, the Narragansett country was "all champain for many miles."

A popular belief has been that the settlers did not know where they were, and that they wandered "across lots" in the woods which in the ordinary view, covered the whole distance traversed, stumbling over the snow-covered tree trunks, crashing through underbrush, falling with their wounded burdens and losing their way. Some of this is true, and is founded on their own statements. Part of it, however, is erroneous. The country was partly open and was crossed in many directions by trails as well defined as any footpath of to-day. The expedition was not a hit or miss affair. It was too costly for that, though the fact might not have prevented the blunders our ancestors were prone to make in their Indian campaigns. The leaders, however, even if the general, who was not much regarded, I am afraid, did get lost, knew where they were. They had for some time known of the stronghold in the swamp. They had the Indian, Peter, who led them thither and who probably led them back again. It is true their historians acknowledge that he saved their army, and little beside this acknowledgment did he receive for the service, but it is idle to speak as if the army could get absolutely lost in the Narragansett with one hundred and fifty Mohegans among them! The main difficulties, it seems from the events, were to keep the trail in the snow and to hold the white men together. The first the Indians of any tribe were perfectly competent to do. The second proved the harder problem.

What was the line of the retreat? There is a tradition that it lay over McSparran Hill, and this I believe to be the fact. I think it was then the easiest line to follow. That is, they left the Swamp by the way they had entered it and kept along what is now the road running by Mr. Clarke's across the present railroad track below the station, thence over Kingston Hill, through Mooresfield and so to the Pequot Path, which must have been even then a cart road.

This line of march followed an Indian trail swinging from the Post Road or Pequot Path around the Swamp and running south through Shannock to the Path again near the present Cross's Mills or turning off toward Westerly on the line of a fragment of a road shown on Caleb Harris's map of 1795.

All over Rhode Island the roads follow the old trails. The Pequot Path or Post Road itself is the best known instance of this, and it was especially true of Narragansett where, as Roger Williams says, "may be a dozen" Indian towns could be found "in twenty miles travel."

Again, Hall and Knight's purchase, in which the Swamp Fort lay was on the line of this ancient trail, which was the means of access to it then as the later road was to the homesteads, pastures or wood lots it afterwards contained. In fact, I believe the trail made possible the purchase. Several ancient houses also, a sure sign of an old road, stand or stood along the line of this path.

If this was a trail in 1675 it early became a cart road. Joseph Davel, a surveyor, testified in 1711 that in 1693



he laid out highways for Hall and Knight through their purchase, and in 1699 the Assembly, in fixing the western line of Kingstown, followed the Usquepaug river to the cart bridge at Mr. Cottrell's. A glance at the map with the bearings and distances in mind will show that the bridge was on this road.

All the army, however, did not return by the same way. "The General, Ministers, and some other persons of the guard, going to hold a small swamp, lost our way and returned again to the evening's quarters," says Dudley, himself presumably one of the ministers. This can only mean that they reached Pettaquamscut where they had camped the night before. Oliver has a similar story, and Increase Mather says "a part of the army missed their way, among whom was the General with his life guard." This party after "wandering up and down" and travelling near thirty miles reached Smith's at seven o'clock the next morning. The main body had arrived five hours earlier. It looks as if the General did not have in his party Peter, the Indian guide who was "captivated" originally by Mosely the Massachusetts officer, not on the march to the fort as is often said, but several days earlier, and who was promised his own freedom and that of his wife in consideration of his services. Yet, ten years after the battle his wife was still in bondage to Mosely, while his daughter though to be a slave for four years only was still wrongfully held.

When the column reached Cocumscussuc its first duty must have been to care for its wounded. All that could



be placed in the block house were there collected, and the writer in the Indian Chronicle says that General Winslow, in order that the house might be thus occupied, lay in a barn belonging to the estate. Other houses were used, which must have been those on the Pequot Path to the north and at Quidnesset. But even this accommodation was bad enough. John Bool, who speaks from experience, says in a petition to the Governor and Court of Massachusetts: "after I was wounded I was carried some twenty miles in a very cold night and laid in A cold chamber, a wooden pillo my covering was ye snow the wind droue on me a sad time to war in to be wounded tho in a litle time I was moued to Rodisland." Some of the uninjured Connecticut soldiers were quartered in what Deputy Governor Leete called "a house without walls."

Only twenty men had been killed outright in the action. Twenty-two died on that march. These, with the twelve dead brought from the Swamp, were buried on December twentieth in what we call the Great Grave. "Many died by the way," says Oliver, "and as soon as they were brought in, so that December 20th, we buried in a grave 34, next day 4, next day 2, and none since here." He was writing on the twenty-sixth of January, our February sixth, 1675.

Those were days of snow and continued cold. The storm of the retreat seems to have continued next day and to have been a heavy one. There was no thaw for some weeks. Winter had set in early that year and we may believe the ground was frozen. Hence the labor

of digging the grave, which must have covered a considerable area, would be heavy and the grave on that account may have been shallow. A confirmation of these conjectures is at hand in the fact that Mr. Edwin Halsey Reynolds, in digging on the ancient site some thirty years ago, could find no remains. A shallow grave allows the chemistry of nature to dispose of its contents in a short time. No metal articles appeared for the bodies were probably interred in thin clothing. Mr. C. B. Reynolds, who, as a young man, was present at the excavation, speaks of finding a stratum of black material in the trench.

The only mark of the grave, up to the present time, except the boulder at the South of it, upon which we have placed our tablet, was the so-called "Grave Apple Tree" blown down in the gale of 1815. Some letters are said to have been cut on a near-by rock in 1879, but a search to-day does not reveal them. The chief memory of this honorable resting place has been handed down in the Updike family, descendants of Richard Smith whose land this was, who have held the estate in unbroken tenure till the early years of the nineteenth century. The tradition among them is authentic, as it seems to the committee, beyond all doubt. The spoken word that identifies this spot can be traced from people now living to the years before the Revolution, when old inhabitants, whose fathers had seen the actors in the tragic drama, were still alive. Wilkins Updike, and his brothers and sisters, heard the story from their father, Lodowick Updike, born in 1725, who remem-

bered his grandfather also, Lodowick, nephew of Richard Smith the younger, and this Lodowick, dying in 1737, must himself have helped to bury his brother Richard in this grave.

It seems strange, however, that no mark was made on the spot and that the whole matter was left to tradition, that our ancestors were so indifferent to the actual resting place of these honored dead. Nothing has ever been said over them. The volleys of the squad drawn up at the grave-side for the final salute were probably the only ceremony. The prayer we have made this afternoon is no doubt the first that the grave has ever known. Even Samuel Sewall so hated the idea of a burial service at a grave that he once went away from the house of a friend without following the body to the churchyard.

Who were the forty slain? We shall never know with certainty. None can tell us who were left in the fort, and the dead of Plymouth and Connecticut are very imperfectly recorded. Eight or nine for Plymouth and about forty for Connecticut are the numbers handed down, but the names we know in a few cases only.

The five captains, there can be little doubt, rest there, Davenport, Johnson, Gardiner, Gallup and Marshall, and probably Seely also, who is said to have been shot by Joshua Tift, and who died of his wound in a few days. Corporal John Edwards of Wethersfield and Ebenezer Dibble of Windsor are there and some others have been named, but we do not know whether they died at Narra-

gansett or on Rhode Island. Dr. Bodge gives the names of the thirty-one Massachusetts dead, but it seems impossible they should all be here, or else the share of Plymouth and Connecticut in the grave is very small. And yet on Connecticut, says Trumbull, fell half the loss in the battle.

Of our own men, the volunteers from this colony, we know only two, Richard Updike, of Narragansett, brother of Lodowick and grandson of the elder Smith, who served in Captain Mosely's company, and Nicholas Power, of Providence, son of the original settler, who, like Captain Gardiner, was killed in the smoke and confusion by his own comrades who were behind him.

If the historians have said too little of the dead, these did not for all that lack their eulogist. The General Court of Connecticut at some time after the battle gave an account of what they call "that signal service the fort fight in Narragansett." Let me use their words. "There died many brave officers and sentinels, whose memory is blessed and whose death redeemed our lives. The bitter cold, the tarled swamp, the tedious march, the strong fort, the numerous and stubborn enemy they contended with, for their God, king and country, be their trophies over death. . . . Our mourners over all the colony witness for our men that they were not unfaithful in that day."

That was their view of the fight—for God and the country. We may have our misgivings, but it is not ours to judge. We right too slowly the wrongs of our own day.

It is ours to be as firm for God and country with our better light as they with their imperfect view; to be as steadfast, as self-controlled, as brave in our bloodless battle with the powers of evil in our day as the men who fell on the crimson snow of that far-off December.

NORMAN MORRISON ISHAM.



## THE MICHAEL PIERCE FIGHT

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By Edwin C. Pierce

September 21, 1907

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This is historic ground. It is the scene of one of the most tragic and most heroic events in early New England history. Here, in 1676, just a hundred years before the Declaration of American Independence, with a valor as distinguished as that of the Greek heroes at old Thermopylæ, although unvictorious, our ancestors, undaunted, fronted inevitable defeat and certain death in hand-to-hand conflict with an outnumbering savage foe. Here they died upon the Bed of Honor.

Here we, their descendants, come, two hundred and thirty-one years after the day of blood and battle on which they painfully laid down their lives for their countrymen and for posterity, to celebrate their brave sacrifice, to erect here a memorial of their heroic devotion, and to consider and, if we may, profitably interpret the lessons to be drawn from the history of that tragic event and that serious and strenuous time.

Let us first review the facts that happened here, the actualities of the tragedy, the fortitude and desperate valor, unsurpassed in the annals of warfare, here displayed;



PIERCE'S FIGHT, CENTRAL FALLS



and then consider somewhat the war in which Pierce's fight was a bloody day, the merits of the war, the cause for which they died.

The day of Pierce's fight was Sunday, March 26th, 1676. It was in the midst of Philip's war. That war, the bloody and decisive struggle between the English colonists and the Indians, has been raging for nearly a year. The Narragansetts, that proud and powerful tribe with whom Roger Williams and the Rhode Island and Providence colonists had long maintained unbroken peace and friendship, had at last been drawn into hostilities towards the colonists. In December, 1675, the Narragansetts had been attacked in their strong fort in South Kingstown, defeated, slaughtered by hundreds, and their power forever broken. With the courage of despair, the still formidable remnant of the Narragansett warriors took the warpath early in the spring of 1676, under their brave chief, who knew not fear, Nanunteenoo, better known as Canonchet, son of the famous Miantonomi.

The Narragansetts, while renewing, and with sincerity so far as may be judged, to Roger Williams pledges of immunity for him did not withhold their vengeance from settlers in Rhode Island. Parties of warriors penetrated into Plymouth Colony, ravaging and killing. Dwelling in continual alarm, the Plymouth Colony was aroused to action for the defense of the homes and the lives of its people. This defense could only be effectually made, the bloody invasion of the Plymouth country could only



be repelled, by waging offensive war against the Narragansetts, by pursuing the marauding bands and attacking them wherever they might be found in their forest fastnesses.

The duty of leading in the pursuit and the attack of the Narragansetts was assigned to Captain Michael Pierce, of Scituate. At the outbreak of Philip's war, Michael Pierce was about sixty years of age, having been born in England about the year 1615. He came to the Plymouth Colony about the year 1645, and settled almost immediately in Scituate, where he ever after resided. He appears to have been a brother of that John Pierce, of London, who secured a patent, or royal grant, for New England, before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, which patent he assigned to the Plymouth Company after their settlement had been effected. He was also, according to the early historians of New England, a brother of that Captain William Pierce who was the most famous master of ships that came to the New England coast; the warm friend of Winslow and Bradford, who commanded the Mayflower in New England waters, although not on her first famous voyage, the "Charity" when she brought Winslow and the first cattle, the "Lion" when she arrived with provisions in the crisis of the famine, Roger Williams being his passenger upon that memorable occasion, and who while fighting the Spaniards in the West Indies was mortally wounded and found his grave in the ocean, on which he had made his long and honorable career. Michael Pierce was with the



Plymouth forces in the bloody Narragansett fight in South Kingstown in December, 1675. Earlier in that year he made his will which is of record in the Plymouth Colony records, the preamble of which is:

“I, Michael Pierce of Scituate, in the government of New Plymouth in America, being now by the appointment of God, going out to war against the Indians doe make this my last will and testament.”

Acting under orders from the Plymouth Colony, Captain Pierce with a company comprising about fifty Englishmen and twenty friendly Cape Indians, started in pursuit of the marauding Narragansetts. The Plymouth band proceeded without encounter with the foe as far as the Rehoboth settlement which was on the extreme western boundary of the Plymouth Colony, separated from the Providence Colony by the Seekonk.

The men of Rehoboth were living in constant expectation of attack from the hostile Indians, and the arrival of Captain Pierce's company must have been most welcome.

Making his temporary headquarters at Rehoboth, Captain Pierce on Saturday, the 25th of March, sallied forth with a small party of his men in search of the hostiles. Discovering the Narragansetts in considerable force the colonists attacked and, without loss to themselves, inflicted considerable losses upon the enemy.

The colonial captain had received intelligence that a party of the enemy lay near Blackstone's house at Study Hill, in Cumberland, and appears not to have been

daunted by the apprehension reasonable to have been entertained that Canonchet with all the warriors of the Narragansett nation might be close at hand, preparing an ambuscade. The Plymouth captain, however, did not omit to summon all the force upon which he could call. Before leaving Rehoboth to march to the attack, he despatched a messenger to Captain Andrew Edmunds, of Providence, with a letter asking Edmunds to meet him at a spot above Pawtucket, on the river, and assist him in the enterprise. The messenger reached Providence on Sunday morning, but either there was delay in the delivery of the letter or the Providence men were not willing to leave Providence undefended. At any rate no reënforcement from Providence reached the Plymouth colonials.

As the ambuscade was near Quinsniket, there can be no doubt that Canonchet with perhaps seven hundred warriors of the brave and now utterly desperate Narragansett nation had made this rocky fastness his base of operations. There, under the overhanging rock of the hill-top the savage chieftain held his council fire and the plan for the ambuscade was laid. The sortie of the colonials from Rehoboth on Saturday must have been reported to Canonchet, and he must have judged that encouraged by their success, the English would continue their advance, and accordingly he prepared to ambush, overwhelm and annihilate them.

Early on Sunday morning the colonials marched from Rehoboth. Their number, recruited at Rehoboth,

amounted to a few over sixty English and about twenty friendly Wampanoags from the Cape. They doubtless proceeded across the Seekonk plains and skirted the east bank of the Blackstone until they reached a point on the river above Pawtucket Falls where the river was fordable, the territory at that point being then called the Attleborough Gore. The territory on the west bank of the river is now in Central Falls. There can be no doubt as to the spot because at no other place on the river could a large body of men approach a ford. At this point the ford was approached through a ravine having a wide level ground on either side of which rose a wood crowned hill. The hills have long since been leveled. The plan of Canonchet was to draw the colonials into this defile and then attack them from the hills and to cut off the retreat by quickly throwing a strong force in their rear. As a decoy a few Indians showed themselves rambling in a wood. They fled at the approach of the colonials, limping as they ran. The colonials supposed them to have been wounded in the fight of Saturday and gave chase.

Captain Pierce led his company into the ravine and approached the river, probably following the advance party of his men which had crossed in safety. Suddenly the silence was rent with savage cries, and springing from their concealment on the commanding hills, the Narragansetts directed their deadly and painfully wounding arrows upon the colonials who were thus entrapped. Canonchet with all his warriors was upon them. The

highest estimate of the number of the Narragansetts that attacked Captain Pierce's little force is about a thousand. Other narratives estimate six or seven hundred. If there were six hundred, the colonials must have realized that their doom was sealed, except indeed for the hope that Captain Edmunds would shortly arrive with his Providence company. Instantly the colonial captain realized that his only chance lay in getting out of the defile by crossing the river. On the west bank there was an open, or at least not heavily wooded, plain, in which his men would be out of arrow shot from the hills and where they could at least make a better defense than was possible in the ravine. Then, to, they would be on the side on which Captain Edmunds might be marching to their aid. It seems probable that in order to make the decoy successful, the warriors on the west side lay in ambush a good distance from the river, so that the colonials were able to cross the river, probably not without loss and gain the open space where they proposed to make their stand.

While the enemy was swarming down the ravine and across the river in hot pursuit, a band of at least three hundred Narragansetts rushed upon the colonials from their concealment on the west side, so that the colonials were now completely surrounded. Captain Pierce now threw his men into a circle placing his men in ranks, back to back, and facing the foe they thus fought to the death.

No banners waived, no martial music stimulated their ardor, no sounds except the reverberations of musketry



and the terrifying yells of the infuriated warriors who encompassed them about. The colonials were indeed better supplied with firearms than the enemy, but they were of the ancient, slow firing sort, while the arrows of the foe were directed against them from behind trees and rocks with unerring aim, and tomahawks hurled through the air by the powerful savage were felling them to the ground. Resolved to sell their lives at as dear a rate as possible, the colonials stood their ground with ever thinning ranks, for about two hours, keeping themselves in order and the enemy at a little distance.

The formation of the order of battle is related by a chronicle of the time in these words:

“Captain Pierce cast his sixty-three English and twenty Indians into a ring, and six fought back to back, and were double, double distance all in one ring, whilst the Indians were as thick as they could stand thirty deep.”

The effectiveness of the defense appears by the great loss suffered by the Narragansetts. Some of them taken prisoners a few days later confessed that one hundred and forty were killed before their victory was won. Drake's Indian Chronicle estimates the loss of the Narragansetts at above three hundred, but this is probably an exaggeration.

At last when, as the tradition is, scarcely twenty of the colonials maintain their footing, they give over futile resistance and break and run, each man for himself. Nine of them are seized and made captive. One of the friendly



Indians, Amos, fought until the colonials had ceased to fight and then by blacking his face with powder, as he saw the Narragansetts had done, mingled with them and escaped. A few others of Captain Pierce's Indians and fewer still of the Englishmen, perhaps three or four, by artifice and good fortune, managed to escape.

The Narragansetts proceeded with their prisoners to the spot in Cumberland now called "Nine Men's Misery." There, according to tradition, the captives were seated upon a rock, a fire lighted, and the war dance preparatory to the torture was begun. The chronicles say that, differing among themselves as to the mode of torture, the Indians dispatched their prisoners with the tomahawk. But, of what happened at Nine Men's Misery there is no real evidence. The bodies of the prisoners were found and buried by the English a little later, and a monumental pile of stones was erected in honor of the brave and unfortunate men.

We may imagine the wild and vengeful joy with which the warriors of Cononchet celebrated their victory in their fastness at Quinsniket. Encouraged by their success, the very next day after the fight the Narragansetts descended upon Rehoboth and burned forty houses, and before the end of March, Providence was attacked and fifty-four buildings burned.

Arnold's history narrates as follows:

"Two places in the town had been fortified mainly through the efforts of Roger Williams, who, although

seventy-seven years of age, accepted the commission of Captain. A tradition is preserved, that when the enemy approached the town the venerable captain went out alone to meet and remonstrate with them. 'Massachusetts,' said he, "can raise thousands of men at this moment, and if you kill them, the King of England will supply their places as fast as they fall.' 'Well, let them come,' was the reply, "we are ready for them. But as for you, brother Williams, you are a good man; you have been king to us many years; not a hair of your head shall be touched.' The savages were true to their ancient friend. He was not harmed, but the town was nearly destroyed."

The capture of Canonchet soon followed, on the 4th of April. He was executed.

Philip's war was the first conflict with the Indians in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

From his coming to Providence, Roger Williams for nearly forty years had lived in friendship with the Narragansetts. Canonicus and Miantonomi were his friends and the friends of the Providence colonists, and Canonchet took up the tradition of peace and amity. The wicked murder of Miantonomi by the procurement of Massachusetts rankled in the breasts of the Narragansetts, and young men of the nation sympathized with Philip when he attempted the confederacy of the tribes. But Canonchet remained faithful to his friendship with Roger Williams and the Narragansetts did not go upon the war path as a tribe, although a few of the young men probably joined Philip's marauding bands.

Rhode Island was not a member of the confederacy of New England colonies, her people condemned the murder of Miantonomi, the Quakers were in control in her government, she disapproved of many acts by which the other colonies had provoked the war, she remained officially neutral. Some of her people, however, aided the other colonies with provisions and volunteers. Events conspired to bring the war home to Rhode Island. Philip's Indians, defeated at Springfield, sought refuge in the Narragansett country, and were hospitably received. The Massachusetts English demanded of Canonchet the surrender of Philip's Indians, who had placed their women and children under the protection of the Narragansett Indians. "Not a Wampanoag, nor the paring of a Wampanoag's nail, shall be delivered up," was the proud answer of the son of Miantonomi. The united colonies now sent an army of over eleven hundred men to attack the Narragansetts.

The invasion of the Narragansett country was made without consulting the government of Rhode Island, which was a violation of the royal charter. But the people of Rhode Island, as well as the Narragansetts themselves, were divided in their counsels and volunteers joined the army of invasion as it marched through Providence and Warwick.

On a Sunday morning in December, 1675, the Narragansett fort was attacked. The greatest battle in New England colonial history ensued. It was a terrible and a

bloody conflict, and for hours the issue was uncertain. Against the entreaty of the valiant and humane Captain Church, the greatest of the Indian fighters of New England, the wigwams within the fort were set on fire. Five hundred wigwams were burned, sick, wounded, infant and aged perishing in the flames. Six hundred Indians lost their lives, half of them in the fight and half in the flames. The English loss was heavy, although less than that of the Narragansetts. A majority of the superior officers fell in the fight. Michael Pierce was in the fight, but escaped with his life only to fall in the March following.

Nothing now remained for the Narragansetts except to go upon the war path. In the spring they inflicted vengeance far and wide. The remnant of the once proud nation must have known that it was now for them a death struggle, that the expulsion of the English was a vain endeavor.

Mutual misunderstanding and distrust was perhaps inevitable between the Indians and the early colonists of New England. Still the long period of peace, and mutual services, is to be remembered; the well cemented friendship of the most powerful of all the Indian tribes, the Narragansetts, to the Rhode Island settlers, is to be considered.

I am inclined to the opinion that Philip's war might have been avoided by the practice of the precepts of Christ by his professed followers, and that if the treatment of the Indians had more generally been as just



and considerate as that practiced by Roger Williams and his associates, the white man and the red man might have dwelt together in peace. There really was room enough for both. The Indians were not nomads, they were willing to live by agriculture and to progress in civilization.

However the responsibility for Philip's war may be awarded, or divided, the fact remains that Michael Pierce and his brave companions from the Plymouth towns fought the fight and died the death as heroes. They were sent here as soldiers to drive back a vengeful and dreaded foe. They died in honorable combat with their faces to the enemy, and history has no record of a bravery in war more splendid than was here displayed by these New England ancestors of ours. They were not personally responsible for the war, nor for any of its cruelty and massacre.

Some of them, at least, like the men of Scituate, came from towns whose inhabitants were distinguished in that stern Puritan age by gentle manners and liberal views. The chivalric captain of Plymouth, the sword and buckler of the colony, was by his character and his career worthy of the monument that stands on Captain's Hill looking towards Provincetown, but surely if Standish, dying in his bed, is thus deserving, his successor sent out by Plymouth in her defense and his brave comrades, who faced certain death and suffered it after the manner of the old classic heroes, should also be thus honored.

There is a just pride and an inspiring incentive in ancestry of heroic deeds and noble lives, but the lesson for us



the descendants of the brave men who here performed the stern duty imposed upon them is not that valor and fidelity on the field of battle give higher title to honorable distinction than service to society in the ways of peace. The victories of peace should have even greater renown than those of war. The fearless and virile qualities may be developed amidst the trials, temptations, sacrifices and conflicts which in our luxurious age await those who obey the call of duty. Our conflicts are not with the untutored red men of the forest, they are with the more puissant forces of corruption and greed. They are also forced upon us, the battle field is not of our choosing, the courage demanded is both moral and physical, there is no retreat, and surrender is moral death. Duty done on such battle-fields is of the same quality and worth as that done amidst scenes of blood and carnage. Most of those who do it best may find scant regard while living and no recognition from posterity; but

“The longer on this earth we live  
 And weight the various qualities of men . . .  
 The more we feel the high stern-featured beauty  
 Of plain devotedness to duty.  
 Steadfast and still, nor paid with mortal praise,  
 But finding amplest recompense,  
 For life’s ungarlanded expense  
 In work done squarely and unwasted days.”

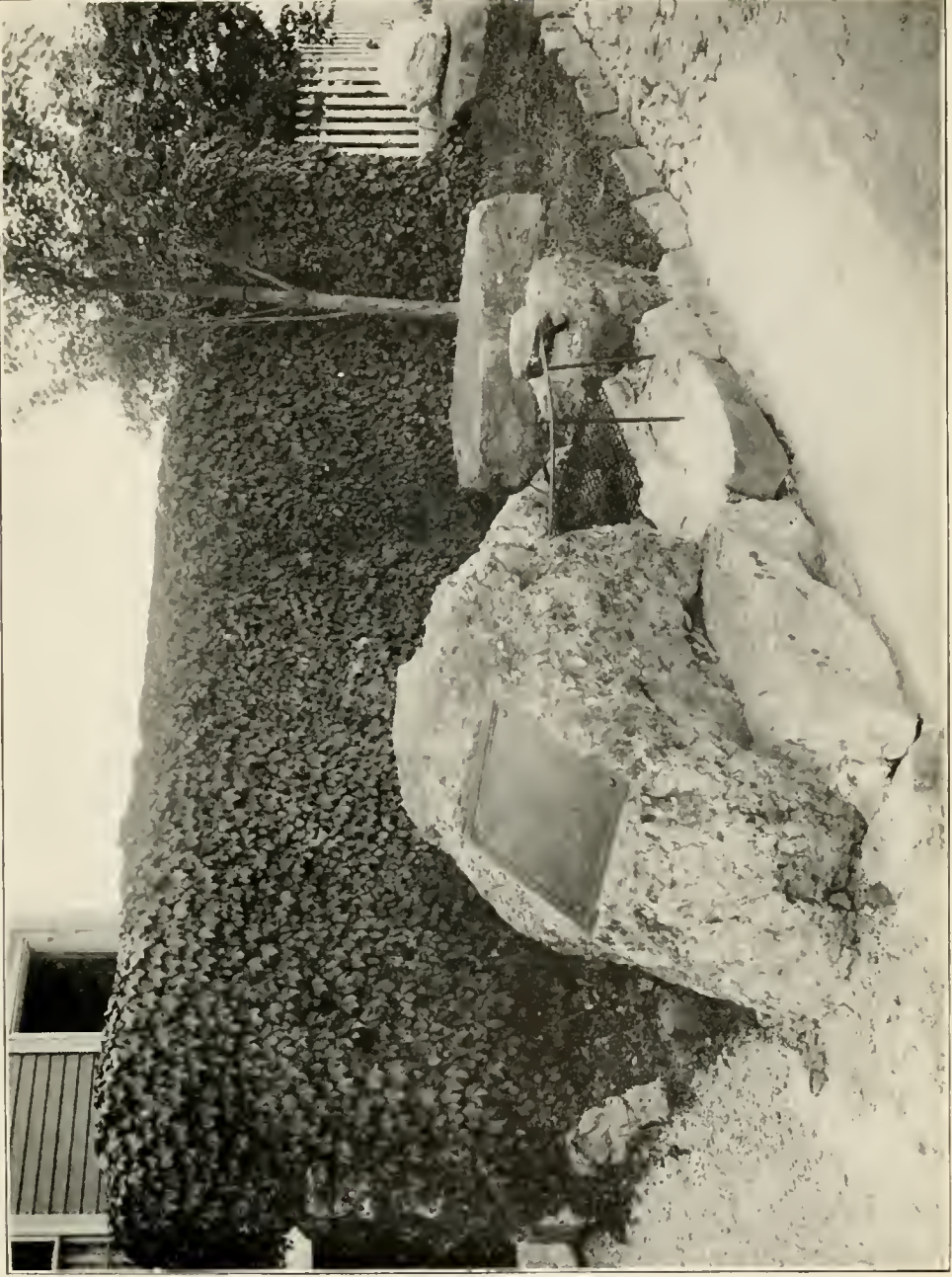
EDWIN C. PIERCE

## THE EXERCISES AT MASSASOIT'S SPRING, WARREN, OCTOBER 19, 1907

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The dedicatory exercises of the Massasoit Memorial, according to the program, commenced at the appointed time with an address by Professor Wilfred H. Munro, as follows:

Acting for the State of Rhode Island, I have the honor, as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Historical Society, of transferring to the custody of the Massasoit Monument Association this tablet. Placed beside the gushing water known for many generations as Massasoit's Spring, it commemorates the great Indian Sachem whose name it bears. May its presence steadily incite to a more intelligent patriotism! May the people of Warren, ever mindful of the prominent part their ancestors played in the early history of this nation, strive always to prove themselves worthy sons of those conscientious and valiant sires! . . . I have the pleasure of calling upon two of the descendants of Massasoit to unveil the tablet . . . and I now place it in charge of Colonel Abbot, the President of the Association.



MASSASOIT'S SPRING, WARREN



THIS TABLET  
PLACED BESIDE THE GUSHING WATER  
KNOWN FOR MANY GENERATIONS AS  
MASSASOIT'S SPRING  
COMMEMORATES THE GREAT  
INDIAN SACHEM MASSASOIT  
"FRIEND OF THE WHITE MAN"  
RULER OF THIS REGION WHEN THE  
PILGRIMS OF THE MAYFLOWER  
LANDED AT PLYMOUTH  
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1620

The tablet having been unveiled the President of the Association thus responded; "Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee for Marking Historical Sites: In behalf of the Massasoit Monument Association, and I believe I am justified in saying, all the citizens of Warren, I thank you most sincerely for this tablet of enduring bronze in honor of him, who was ruler of this region in 1620 when the white man came to it, and what is of vastly more importance, who became the friend of that white man. In accepting this tablet I am moved more deeply than I can express, because standing beside it, as our honored guests, are two in whose veins flows the blood of him for whom this memorial has been erected. Two hundred and eighty-six years ago men of our race came to this spot, and Massasoit welcomed them. We feel it to be a great honor that you, Charlotte and Alonzo Mitchell,



are here to-day, and to no other hands than yours would we have entrusted the sacred duty of unveiling this tablet.

#### EXERCISES IN THE TOWN HALL.

The committee and guests then adjourned to the town hall where at three o'clock the exercises were continued according to the Program. After the rendering of Eichberg's most inspiring hymn, "To thee, O Country, the President spoke as follows:

In 1620 this place was the capital of a nation, and he in whose honor we have gathered was the ruler. He was a native American, and it would have been more to our credit if we had not allowed nearly two hundred and fifty years to elapse, since his death, before erecting a memorial to him. To whom the credit for the idea should be given no one can tell. That Norman G. Burr, a former townsman, was the first to contribute for the purpose is a matter of record. Zachariah Allen, then president of the Rhode Island Historical Society, was the second donor, and the two sums lying by for many years in our savings institution formed a substantial nucleus for further funds. The Thalia Club, a local dramatic society, largely through the influence of our present secretary, Eugene A. Vaughan, gave an unique and pleasing entertainment on February 8, 1893, for the benefit of the monument fund. Governor D. Russell Brown evinced great interest, and delivered an address. Our distinguished and lamented townsman,

Hezekiah Butterworth, to whose heart the idea of a memorial was very dear, spoke of Massasoit of Sowams in Pokanoket. The poem of George Henry Coomer to be read this afternoon, was on the program, as also one from the pen of Frederick Denison. Pleasing musical numbers by local talent were interspersed, and the occasion was a great success in every way, adding a considerable sum to the fund. Other contributions followed, and the plan gained a substantial financial footing, but it seemed difficult to secure an unanimity of opinion on a site, and the interest gradually waned, not to be revived until last fall, when at the request of a few of the surviving members of the Association, the chairman and secretary of the State Committee for Marking Historical Sites, representing the entire body, visited the site of the Spring, and as a result a bronze tablet to be placed on a suitable memorial at that place was promised. Meetings of the Association were held, the membership increased from about twenty to over a hundred, a constitution adopted, new officers elected, and an executive committee chosen to conduct affairs. In the meantime Abby A. Cole, a lineal descendant of Sergeant Hugh Cole, who was the friend of Metacomet, Massasoit's younger son and ultimate successor, offered a boulder from the land formerly her ancestor's and the appropriateness of this gift was a direct appeal for action. The practical skill of Cornelius Harrington was necessary for the successful moving of the eight-ton conglomerate from its ancient to its modern bed.

The artistic taste of John DeWolf from our neighbor town on the Mount Hope lands was invoked, and the greater part of August spent in erecting the memorial. The town did its share by authorizing the improvement of the street, and the energy of our highway commissioner, James A. Seymour, has borne fruit therein. The Association has now been incorporated in order that it may legally hold property, and has admitted to membership fifteen of the wives and other female relatives of the male members, realizing full well the interest which women have in all such matters, and that their enthusiasm is a most potent factor for success. The interest of the owner of the property about the memorial, Frank W. Smith, has been of great assistance and has culminated in a most generous gift to the Association of the spring site, to have and to hold forever. It is my privilege and pleasure in behalf of the Association to tender its sincere thanks to all who have assisted in any way, by contribution of money, or work of head or hand to the successful accomplishment of the memorial, and the dedication thereof, to the first citizen of this town of whom there is any record, the great Indian Sachem, Massasoit. And especially do we greet and render thanks to you, Alonzo and Charlotte Mitchell, for returning to the home of your fathers to honor us with your presence.

But the Association does not stop its work here. Its by-laws provide that it shall promote any enterprise, the design of which is the improvement of physical and

esthetic conditions in the community. It has made a beginning of such work by the decoration of the surroundings of the railroad station, accomplished through the generosity of one of its members. It does not mean to interfere with the duty of the town council, or encroach upon the prerogatives of the Business Men's Association, or any other body. It has neither political nor sectarian affiliations. It is made up of representative citizens of this town who in accepting membership have signified their interest in something which stands for an uplifting above the ordinary conditions of life. A public park where leisure hours may be happily spent; the planting of trees to replace those which formerly arched our streets from end to end; a monument to the patriots who have borne arms in all the wars of our beloved country are some of the things which the Association hopes to accomplish in the future.

What more potent inspiration for all good works could we have than the words of our revered poet-historian, whose cup of happiness would, we believe, be full to overflowing could he have been spared to be with us to-day:

“Warren! where first beside the cradled Nation  
 The old chief stood, we love thy storied past.  
 Sowams is pleasant for a habitation—  
 'Twas thy first history—may it be thy last.”

The “Indian March” was spiritedly played, after which the President introduced Professor Munro in the following terms: As far back as 1880 the historian of our



neighbor town to the south was sufficiently impressed by the value of tradition to give public expression to his belief that the spot which we honor to-day was Massasoit's Spring. I feel that it does not detract from the honor due to all the members of the Committee for Marking Historical Sites to say that to the chairman more than any other, are we indebted for the tablet beside the gushing water. It is therefore with profound feelings of gratitude that I introduce Professor Wilfred Harold Munro.

Professor Munro spoke, informally, in part as follows:

Under primitive conditions of life the three principal necessities for existence are water, food and shelter. This is true whether we live in solitude or in communities. The first necessity for a settled abode would seem to be a never failing supply of water. Food can be obtained in many places: water that is not contaminated must always be sought at its source. In the earliest days of Monasticism in Egypt a spring, a palm tree and a cave were regarded as the necessary "plant" for those who wished to lead a life of solitude and of contemplation. Water was the first requisite, then came the date-palm with its food, the cave in that perfect climate was sought for only as a shelter from the wild beasts. By the end of the fourth century the region known as the Thebaid was filled with men living in this primitive way. These monks had reverted to the simple life of the savage. The natives our ancestors encountered when they landed upon the continent had never passed beyond that simple life.



They sought for living springs as prerequisites for their temporary habitations. But there were no trees or shrubs to afford them food throughout the year and the wild animals were too insignificant and too few in number to furnish a food supply. In this region therefore they pitched their rude wigwams near the shore where they could without much difficulty secure fish, wild fowl, clams and oysters. The waters of Narragansett Bay were then more plentifully stocked with fish than now. Ducks, geese and other wild fowl must also have been much more abundant. The Indian *shot* both fish and fowl.

Near the spring we have marked to-day was unquestionably an Indian village in the year of our Lord, 1620. As a historical student I wish we might always have as reasonable grounds for connecting names with physical features as we have in this case. If ever a fact was firmly established by tradition the fact of Massasoit's connection with this spring is. Jedediah Morse, "Father of American Geography," caught the story from the lips of the children of those who had lived in the days of Massasoit and transferred it to his American Gazetteer in 1805. For more than a hundred years the tradition has been perpetuated upon the printed page. It is seldom that a story can be so easily substantiated. Not far away, at Mount Hope, in Bristol, is a shallow well which has been known ever since the founding of the town in 1680 as "King Philip's Spring." You would be amazed to learn how infrequent in manuscripts and books is the

mention of this famous spring. I can find hardly a reference that is more than seventy-five years old, none as old as Morse's reference to Massasoit's Spring. The story has simply been passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation and no man has ever been rash enough to question its truth. This is all the more remarkable because on the other side of Mount Hope is another spring which gushes forth not far from the spot where King Philip was killed.

May I in the short time at my disposal endeavor to set forth the life the Indians and our ancestors lived in our earliest Colonial days! Of what kind of structures did the villages of the Indian consist? They were very rough and uncomfortable places of abode, not entirely unlike those you may see to-day in the "Indian Country" of our western states and territories, and yet much ruder than are the wigwams, of to-day. The Indian we know has profited somewhat from his nearness to civilization.

When the Plymouth representatives paid their first visit to Massasoit they found the Chief occupying a wigwam a little larger than those of his subjects. But when night came Massasoit and his wife occupied as a bed a platform of boards raised a little from the ground and covered with a thin mat. On this bed the Indian Sachem also placed his visitors with himself and his wife, "they at one end and the Englishmen at the other, and two more of Massasoit's men pressed by and upon them, so that they were worse weary of the lodging than of the

journey." The accommodation could hardly be called luxurious.

The Indians were "lusty" men. The word "lusty" was then used as we use the word "husky" to-day in speaking of our football players. All our players are "husky" men though many of their fellow students are not. They are so because they are physically the best men that can be picked out from hundreds of undergraduates. The Indians were all "lusty" men from a different reason. As with the Zulus of South Africa it was with them, a case of the survival of the fittest. It was because all the weakly children died that our ancestors had such a race of athletes for their antagonists.

The weapons they used were not of much account as compared with those the colonists carried, but they were so skilled in the use of them that they proved to be most formidable foes. The white men were rarely as "lusty" men as their opponents though their weakest died quickly in the terrible early years of the Plymouth Colony. But in weapons and equipment they far surpassed the savages. Our ancestors whom Massasoit saw were armed with muskets and swords. They wore helmets and corselets of metal. When metal was lacking they wore quilted corselets stiff enough to protect from Indian arrows. The Indian sachem and his men soon learned the superiority of the English equipment and governed their conduct accordingly.

The earliest habitations of the Colonists were hardly more comfortable than were the wigwams of the Aborigines.

Study the accounts given of the first houses in Plymouth and you will be convinced of the fact. Those log huts were built in a very rude way. Shelter only was sought for, luxury was not dreamed of. The chimneys were on the outside. No bricks were used in their construction because no bricks were made in the country. The very wide fireplaces were lined with stone, but the flues above were ordinarily built with what we might call light cordwood set in clay and plastered with the same material. Under such conditions it is hardly necessary to say that constant vigilance was necessary to prevent these primitive structures from taking fire. Dwellings like those our ancestors used may be seen to-day as you pass through the State of South Carolina on the railway trains. As far as comfort goes the negroes who inhabit them are much better off than the Plymouth colonists were.

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#### THE HISTORICAL ADDRESS DELIVERED BY COLONEL HIGGINSON.

Colonel Higginson read as follows:

##### MASSASOIT.

The newspaper correspondents tell us that when an inquiry was one day made among visitors, returning from the recent Jamestown Exposition, as to the things seen by each of them which he or she would remember longest, one



man replied, "That life size group in the Smithsonian building which shows John Smith in his old cock-boat trading with the Indians. He is giving them beads or something and getting baskets of corn in exchange" (Outlook, October, 1907). This seemed to the man who said it and quite reasonably, the very first contact with civilization on the part of the American Indians. Precisely parallel to which is the memorial which we meet to dedicate and which records the first interview in 1620 between the little group of Plymouth Pilgrims and Massasoit, known as the "greatest commander of the country" and sachem of the whole region north of Narragansett Bay (Bancroft's United States, i, 247).

"Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate" says the poet Pope and nothing is more remarkable in human history than the way in which great events sometimes reach their climax at once, instead of gradually working up to it. Never was this better illustrated than when the Plymouth Pilgrims first met the one man of this region who could guarantee them peace for fifty years and did so. The circumstances seem the simplest of the simple.

The first hasty glance between the Plymouth Puritans and the Indians did not take place, as you will recall, until the new comers had been four days on shore, when, in the words of the old chronicler "they espied five or six people with a Dogge coming toward them, who were savages; who when they saw them ran into the Wood and whistled



the Dogge after them." (This quadruped, whether large or small, had always a capital letter in his name, while people and savages had none, in these early narratives.) When the English pursued the Indians "they ran away might and main." (E. W. Peirce's *Indian History*.) The next interview was a stormier one; four days later, when those same Pilgrims were asleep on board the "shallop" on the morning of December 8, 1620 (now December 19), when they heard "a great and strange cry" and arrow shots came flying amongst them which they returned and one Indian "gave an extraordinary cry" and away they went. After all was quiet, the Pilgrims picked eighteen arrows, some headed with brass, some with hart's horn (deer's horn), and others with eagles' claws" (Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, 158), the brass heads at least showing that those Indians had met Englishmen before.

Three days after this encounter at Namskeket—namely on December 22d, 1620 (a date now computed as December 23)—the English landed at Patuxet, now Plymouth. Three months passed before the sight of any more Indians, when Samoset came, all alone with his delightful salutation "Welcome Englishmen," and a few days later (March 22, 1621), the great chief of all that region, Massasoit, appeared on the scene.

When he first made himself visible with sixty men, on that day, upon what is still known as Strawberry Hill, he asked that somebody be sent to hold a parley with him. Edmund Winslow was appointed to this office, and went

forward protected only by his sword and armor and carrying presents to the sachem. Winslow also made a speech of some length bringing messages (quite imaginary, perhaps, and probably not at all comprehended) from King James, whose representative, the Governor, wished particularly to see Massasoit. It appears from the record written apparently by Winslow, himself, that Massasoit made no particular reply to this harangue, but paid very particular attention to Winslow's sword and armor and proposed at once to begin business by buying them. This, however, was refused, but Winslow induced Massasoit to cross a brook between the English and himself, taking with him twenty of his Indians who were bidden to leave their bows and arrows behind them. Beyond the brook, he was met by Captain Standish, with an escort of six armed men, who exchanged salutations and attended him to one of the best but unfinished houses in the village. Here a green rug was spread on the floor and three or four cushions. The governor, Bradford, then entered the house, followed by three or four soldiers and preceded by a flourish from a drum and trumpet which quite delighted and astonished the Indians. It was a deference paid to their sachem. He and the governor then kissed each other, as it is recorded (we have no information as to whether the governor enjoyed it) sat down together and regaled themselves with an entertainment. The feast is recorded by the early narrator as consisting chiefly of strong waters, a "thing the savages love very well" it is said "and the

sachem took such a large draught of it at once as made him sweat all the time he staied." (Thatcher's *Lives of Indians*, i., 119.)

A substantial treaty of peace was made on this occasion, one immortalized by the fact that it was the first made with the Indians of New England. It is the unquestioned testimony of history that the negotiation was remembered and followed by both sides for half a century; nor was Massasoit nor any of the Wampanoags during his lifetime convicted of having violated or attempted to violate any of its provisions. This was a great achievement! Do you ask what price bought all this? The price practically paid for all the vast domain and power granted to the white man consisted of the following items: a pair of knives and a copper chain with a jewel in it, for the grand sachem; and for his brother, Quadequina, a knife, a jewel to hang in his ear, a pot of strong waters, a good quantity of biscuit and a piece of butter." (Thatcher's *Lives of Indians*, i., 120.)

Fair words, the proverb says, butter no parsnips, but the fair words of the white men had provided the opportunity for performing that process. The description preserved of the Indian chief by an eye witness was as follows: "In his person he is a very lusty man, in his best years, an able body, grave of countenance, and spare speech; in his attire little or nothing differing from the rest of his followers, only in a great chain of white bone beads about his neck; and at it, behind his neck, hangs a

little bag of tobacco, which he drank, and gave us to drink—(this being the phrase for that indulgence in those days, as is found in Ben Johnson and other authors). His face was painted with a sad red like murrey (so called from being the color of the Moors) and oiled both head and face that he looked greasily. All his followers likewise were in their faces, in part or in whole, painted, some black, some red, some yellow, and some white, some with crosses, and other antic works; some had skins on them, and some naked; all strong all men in appearance.” (Young’s *Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, 194.) All this Dr. Young tells us would have been a good description of an Indian party under Black Hawk which was presented to the President at Washington as late as 1837 and also, I can say the same of one seen by myself coming from a prairie in Kansas, yet unexplored in 1856.

Lane tells us that in oriental countries smoking is called drinking and the aim of all is bring the smoke into the lungs. (Young’s *Chronicles of Plymouth*, 188.)

The interchange of eatables was evidently at that period a pledge of good feeling, as it is to-day. On a later occasion Captain Standish, with Isaac Alderton, went to visit the Indians, who gave them three or four ground nuts and some tobacco. The writer afterwards says, “Our governor bid them send the king’s kettle and filled it full of pease which pleased them well, and so they went their way.” It strikes the modern reader as if this were pease and peace practically equivalent, and as if the parties needed



only a pun to make friends. It is doubtful whether the arrival of a conquering race was ever in the history of the world marked by a treaty so simple and therefore noble.

"This treaty with Massasoit" says Belknap, "was the work of one day," and being honestly intended on both sides, was kept with fidelity as long as Massasoit lived. (Belknap's American Biography, ii, 214.) In September, 1639, Massasoit and his oldest son, Mooanam, afterwards called Wamsutta, came into the court at Plymouth and desired that this ancient league should remain inviolable, which was accordingly ratified and confirmed by the government, (Young's Chronicles of the Pilgrims, 194 note), and lasted until it was broken by Philip, the successor of Wamsutta, in 1675. It is not my affair to discuss the later career of Philip, whose insurrection is now viewed more leniently than in its own day, but the spirit of it was surely quite mercilessly characterized by a Puritan minister, Increase Mather, who when describing a battle in which old Indian men and women, the wounded and the helpless were burned alive said proudly, "This day we brought five hundred Indian souls to hell." (Pierce's Indian Biography, 22.)

But the end of all was approaching. In 1623, Massasoit sent a messenger to Plymouth to say that he was ill, and Governor Bradford sent Mr. Winslow to him with medicines and cordials. When they reached a certain ferry, upon Winslow's discharging his gun, Indians came to him from a house not far off, who told him that Massasoit



was dead and that day buried. As they came nearer, at about half an hour before the setting of the sun, another messenger came and told them that he was not dead, though there was no hope that they would find him living. Hastening on, they arrived late at night. "When we came thither" Winslow writes, "we found the house so full of men as we could scarce get in, though they used their best diligence to make way for us. There were they in the midst of their charms for him, making such a hellish noise as it distempered us that were well, and therefore unlike to ease him that was sick. About him were six or eight women who chafed his arms, legs and thighs to keep heat in him. When they had made an end of their charming, one told him that his friends the English were come to see him. Having understanding left, but his sight was wholly gone, he asked who had come. They told him Winsnow, for they cannot pronounce the letter l, but ordinarily n in place thereof. He desired to speak with me. When I came to him and they told him of it, he put forth his hand to me which I took. When he said twice though very inwardly, Keen Winsnow? which is to say, Art thou Winslow? I answered Ahhe, that is Yes. Then he doubled these words, Matta neen wonckanet nanem, Winsnow: that is to say, O Winslow, I shall never see thee again! Then I called Hobbamock and desired him to tell Massasoit that the governor hearing of his sickness, was sorry for the same; and though by many businesses he could not come himself, yet he sent me with such things for him as he thought most likely to do good in this extrem-

ity; and whereof if he be pleased to take, I would presently give him; which he desired, and having a confection of many comfortable conserves on the point of my knife, I gave him some which I could scarce get through his teeth. When it was dissolved in his mouth, he swallowed the juice of it; whereat those that were about him much rejoiced, saying that he had not swallowed anything in two days before." (E. W. Peirce's *Indian History*, 25, 26.)

Then Winslow tells how he nursed the sick chief, sending messengers back to the governor for a bottle of drink and some chickens from which to make a broth for his patient. Meanwhile he dissolved some of the confection water and gave it to Massasoit to drink; within half an hour the Indian improved. Before the messengers could return with the chickens, Winslow made a broth of meal and strawberry leaves and sassafras root which he strained through his handkerchief and gave the chief who drank at least a pint of it. After this his sight mended more and more, and all rejoiced that the Englishman had been the means of preserving the life of Massasoit. At length the messengers returned with the chicken but Massasoit "finding his stomach come to him he would not have the chickens killed, but kept them for breed."

From far and near his followers came to see their restored chief who feelingly said "Now I see the English are my friends and love me: and whilst I live I will never forget this kindness they have showed me."

It would be interesting were I to take the time to look into the relations of Massasoit with others, especially

with Roger Williams, but this has been done by others, particularly in the somewhat imaginative chapter of my old friend, Mr. Butterworth, and I have already said enough. Nor can I paint the background of that strange early society of Rhode Island, its reaction from the stern Massachusetts rigor and its quaint and varied materials. In that new state as Bancroft keenly said, there were settlements "filled with the strangest and most incongruous elements . . . so that if a man had lost his religious opinions, he might have been sure to find them again in some village in Rhode Island."

Meanwhile "the old benevolent sachem, Massasoit," says Drake's Book of the Indians, "having died in the winter of 1661-2," so died a few months after his oldest son Alexander. Then came by regular succession, Philip, the next brother, of whom the historian Hubbard says that for his "ambitious and haughty spirit he was nicknamed 'King Philip.' " From this time followed war-like dismay in the colonies ending in Philip's piteous death. To-day as a long deferred memorial to Philip's father, Massasoit, with his simple and modest virtues, this memorial tablet has been dedicated. It may be said of Massasoit's career in the noble words of Young's "Night Thoughts,"—

"Each man makes his own stature; builds himself.

Virtue alone outbuilds the Pyramids:

Her monuments shall last when Egypt's fall."

## DRUM ROCK

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Address by William B. Weeden, May 30, 1908

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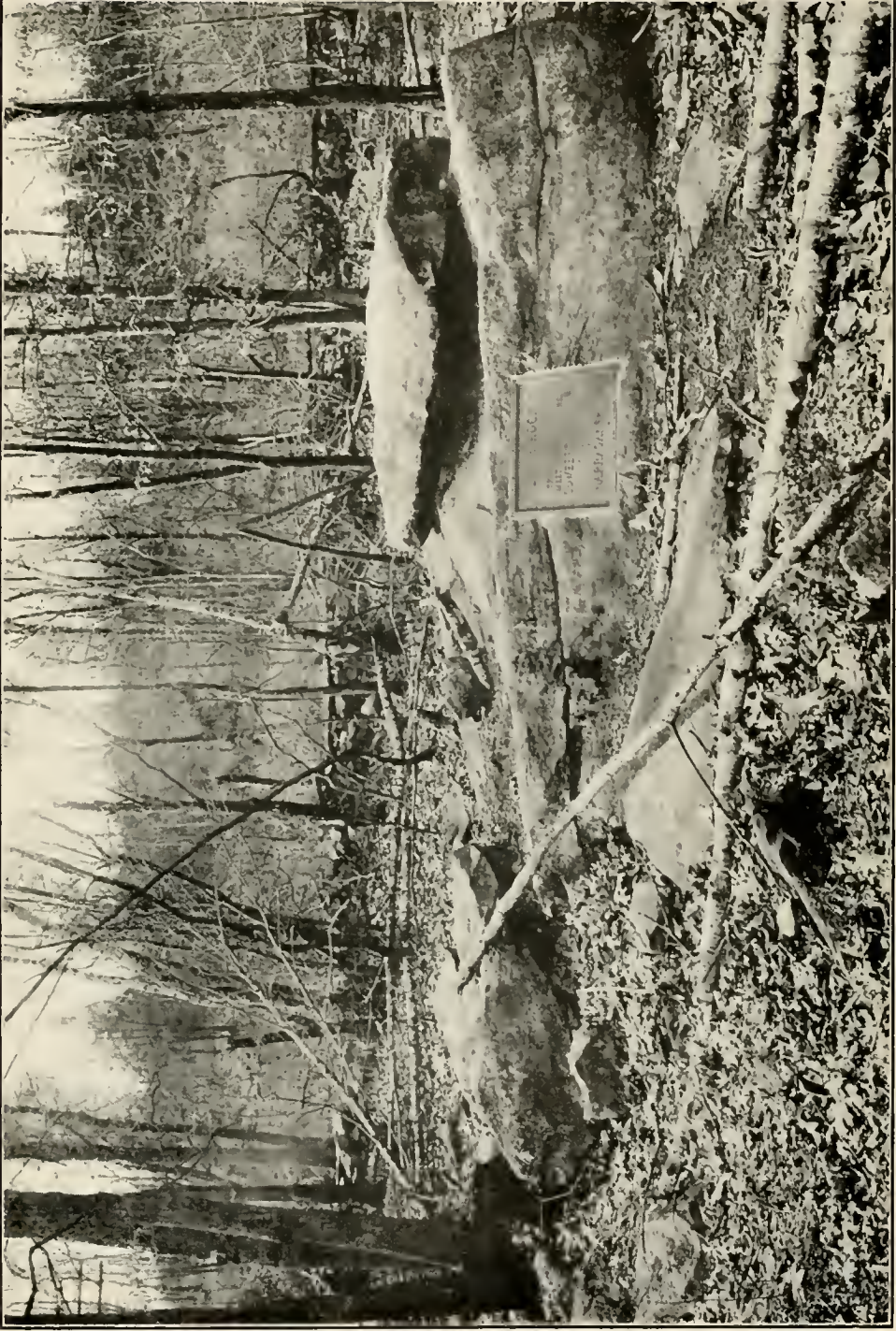
The ground where we stand was conveyed to Samuel Gorton and ten others, for 144 fathom of wampumpeage, January 12, 1642. The deed describes "a parcell of lands, lyinge upon the west side of that part of the sea called Schomes Bay from Copassnetuxet, over against the outmost of that next of land called Shawhomett upon a strait line westward twenty miles." It is signed by Myantonomey the suzerain, with the significant statement "possession given with the free and joynt consent of the prisint inhabitants, being natives, as it appears by their hands." In another column are the signatures of Totonomans, Pumham Sachem of Showhommet and Jano. When Pumham acted thereafter, Soccononocco generally appeared with him. I think he must have been either Totonomans or Jano, though I have not been able to trace the connection. The document is given by Judge Staples in his edition of Gorton's "Simplicity's Defense."\*

Roger Williams, in another connection said, "I had not only Meantanomey and all the Coweset sachems my friends but Ousamaquin (a Wamponoag) also." Induced

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\*R. I. Historical Colls., 2 p. 253.





DRUM ROCK, APPONAUG





by the Arnolds, Pumham and Soccononocco went to Boston in 1643, and submitted to the jurisdiction of Massachusetts. Cuchamakin, a Massachusetts sachem, testified to the General Court, that Pumham was as independent as himself.

Samuel Gorton was one of the strongest individual minds Rhode Island ever had among her citizens. Judge Brayton in his defense of Gorton said, there "was no independent sachem between the Wampanoags and the Narragansetts. Pumham and Soccononocco were Coweset sachems."\* Mr. George T. Paine, a careful student of Indian lore, defined Cowekesit, Cowekesuck or Cowesit to be the shore between Apponaug and Greenwich villages, thence westward to Crompton, and to mean "the place of the young pines."

Drum Rock, that we commemorate, is a very large boulder partially sunk in the earth. Probably by glacial action or by frost, a large flat fragment estimated at two and one-half tons was broken off, lifted and nicely balanced on one edge of the cavity. Standing on the upper stone and throwing one's weight on either foot, it easily rocks to and fro and drums on the boulder. The sound reverberates at a distance, and in the stillness of prehistoric time it must have penetrated much farther, with more solemn effect.

According to tradition the upper stone was disturbed and moved by vandals about 1837. The villagers of

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\*R. I. Historical Tracts, No. 17, p. 101.

Apponaug with considerable effort restored it, but were unable to bring back the old delicacy of balance; since then the sound has not extended so far.

This statement would not have touched or impressed the native when Gorton and his companions settled at Shawomet. Whatever the facts his inductive convictions reached him differently. He knew nothing of glaciers or glacial action. He lived in close contact with nature, but not as we view her. His religion prompted him to worship sun, moon or stars; and he readily defied a great visible force, and in a sort of idealization of the bear or panther. Any pronounced manifestation of nature—especially if unusual—was to him supernatural, as we call it. Any marvel like Drum Rock fired his imagination at once, and gathered traditions about it, as time went on. Hence, this reverberating sound—fascinating to-day—was even more bewitching three centuries ago. Our tablet was literally true.

“Drum Rock, a trysting signal and meeting place of the Coweset Indians and their kindred Narragansetts.”

The Shawomet tribes were a branch of the Narragansett nation, as the Niantics were on the west toward the Pequots. “All do agree they were a great people,” said Roger Williams, and let us glance at his reports of their aboriginal life. There were many villages, possibly a dozen in twenty miles travel, and nowhere were they more teeming than by Coweset and along the Pequot path

by Sugar Loaf Hill and the little island of Nahnygansett in Point Judith Pond. The wigwams were covered without and lined within with mats of bark or skins; a hole for smoke at the top. "Those filthy smoakie holes" in the words of the narrator. But any house of the seventeenth century was not very agreeable in a northeast storm. Their implements were appropriate to the stone age, arrow heads, hatchets, mortars for beating corn, and chisels.

The making of canoes excited Williams' highest admiration; they were for three or four, sometimes for forty men. A native went into the woods with a stone hatchet and a basket of corn, built a hut and felled a chestnut tree. He continued "hewing and burning, lying there at his work alone," until in ten or twelve days he had finished and launched his boat. He then ventured to fish in the ocean. With their fleets of canoes the Narragansetts held Block Island in subjection. This fact alone would show the relative superiority of the Narragansett nation. The manufacture and sale of wampum had brought wealth from the interior, as far as the Mohawk country. They were beginning to be commercial and had risen above mere hunting tribes, as Columbus with his caravels ranked above a Castilian baron bent on hunt or foray. Hubbard says they were more civil and courteous than other natives. And Gookin, the enlightened superintendent of the Massachusetts Indians, said the Narragansetts were an "active, laborious and ingenious people."

In due season there was "wonderful plenteous hunting," and the women planted and tended corn with the clam-shell hoe. They gathered the crop and beat it in a mortar. They "barned" the reserved; in Philip's war, when our Indians were driven into interior Massachusetts, they occasionally foraged back for the corn cached in hollow trees and caves. "It is almost incredible what burthens the poore women carry of corne, of fish, of beans, of mats and a childe besides." We must not regard these divisions of labor by sex from our point of view. The Indian had faults enough, but he was not idle or dissolute until alcohol ruined him. There are two systems of labor; ours is regulated and continuous; the barbarian's is spasmodic and exhaustive. The Indian brave carried a little parched corn on the warpath or hunting tramp, tightening his belt as hunger increased. He exhausted all his strength in these masculine efforts; his squaw did the rest and did it cheerfully.

Williams was more and more impressed by "their active and industrious habits" though the braves would do no agriculture except to raise tobacco. They used this moderately, and it served a symbolic function in their great smoking councils. One of these meetings for deliberation gathered nearly one thousand persons.\* Johnson, the great Puritan, in 1637 was much impressed to "see how solidly and wisely these savage people did consider of the weighty undertaking of a war, especially

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\*Roger Williams, *Key*, p. 62.



old Canonicus, who was very discreet in his answers." Canonicus was one of the greatest aborigines history has recorded.

Among themselves they were great gamblers, and there was a seamy side seldom lacking in their intercourse with whites. Their notions of property were very crude, and friendly as they were to Williams, they stole his goats from Prudence Island. After Pumham and Socononocco had intrigue with the authorities of Massachusetts, Gorton said they were no better than cattle thieves. In conveying land, doubtless they meant to give up what they did not want for themselves. The "common sort" of Indians planted at Providence and Warwick without permission; they "mingled fields" with the English, and this made trouble. By the second generation, either race would be rid of the other. Canonicus gone, the brave but rash Canonchet joined in Philip's injudicious war, and the Narragansetts were nearly exterminated.

Yet in their own living, their system worked not badly. Williams said \*"the sachems have an absolute Monarchie" over the people "though they consulted and persuaded their constituents." Under such rule, vice and crime were not as scandalous as in Europe. "Commonly they never shut their doors day or night, and 'tis rare that any hurt is done."

Tribal custom stood in place of ordinary law and active public opinion. Ultimately this must yield to organized

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\*Key, p. 62.

government. Meanwhile, from the aboriginal point of view, there was little to be desired in the English system of government. We must remember the natives saw on one side the treacherous murder of Miantinomi, inspired by the petty state craft of the Boston Puritans; on the other they were oppressed by the jail and the whipping-post. In the religious life, the evolution was no better. Respect as we would the kindly labors of Williams and the apostolic sacrifices of Eliot, the actual results were meagre and almost nugatory. Goodkin said "the time of the great harvest of their (the natives\*) in gathering is not yet come, but will follow after calling of the Jews." But Williams, charitable toward all Christian belief shows his naive and unseeing comprehension of the great sources of religion in this wise: "I durst never be an eyewitnesse, spectatour or looker on (at Indian ceremonies) lest I should have partake of Sathan's inventions and worships," as forbidden in Ephesians.

The great romancer Fenimore Cooper exaggerated the nobility of the Indian, as Walter Scott overdrew the heroic qualities of his gillies and their Highland chieftans. We need not depreciate in our turn. Having immensely wider knowledge of racial conditions, we ought to be wiser than they were in the early nineteenth or the seventeenth century. Let us be just to a race living well in its own time.

Inevitably, the Indian left few permanent monuments. Even in these small districts he was migratory, flitting from

winter quarters to "summer fields." He laid no corner stones, reared no columns or pyramids. Let us preserve and cherish this interesting memorial of his actual living. The moving rock sounds across the centuries and brings back the friendly owners of the soil.

WILLIAM B. WEEDEN.

## PRESCOTT'S HEADQUARTERS

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The Address of William Paine Sheffield, September 10, 1908

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Here occurred one of the most picturesque, daring and successful achievements of the American Revolution. When the details of many a carefully planned campaign have passed from popular notice, the American people will remember, and recount with pride the simple story of the capture of General Prescott by Colonel Barton.

The possibility of the carrying off of its commander while surrounded by its army and protected by a friendly fleet, through the bold act of a mere handful of countrymen, never entered the minds of the British forces on Rhode Island. It could never have been planned except by a bold and courageous man, and never have been executed, except by a well informed and sagacious leader, seconded by prudent and daring companions.

While it was not one of the great events which were turning points in the struggle for independence, it came at a time when the American arms had few successes and it did much to encourage the people to persevere in the conflict. It showed what a daring man with a few resolute companions may accomplish, and it is almost impossible to estimate its effect in arousing the people to exertion and





GENERAL PRESCOTT'S HEADQUARTERS, PORTSMOUTH





in bringing about the final result. As showing what individual effort, intelligently directed, may accomplish, it should be kept fresh in the memory of our country by spoken word and enduring bronze. The story has so much of the courage and the personality of the gallant Barton that when once the story is heard it is not easily forgotten.

The colony of Rhode Island in its attitude and conduct in the great conflict for liberty and independence had a part which time can only make clearer and more resplendent. Before Concord and Lexington, here, on the waters of Narragansett bay, occurred the preliminary struggles which led up to the great conflict. Here, whatever of truth or fallacy lay in the cry "that taxation without representation was unjust and intolerable," a commercial and enterprising race of merchants, privateersmen and sailors, accustomed to the freedom of the seas, felt especially the heavy iron hand of the British navigation acts press upon their commerce and their liberties and they were early ready to resist.

Here was the most magnificent bay upon the Atlantic coast, with its miles of seashore, its numerous outlets to the sea, open on every wind to sailing vessels for speedy entrance and exit. Harbors and centres of commerce developed in spite of the navigation laws, at Newport, near the Stone Bridge, at Bristol, Warren, Providence, East Greenwich bay, Wickford and elsewhere. There were no more hardy and experienced mariners than came

from the Rhode Island colony. Its bold privateersmen had not hesitated in the past to meet the enemies of England in ships and on the Spanish Main, and elsewhere. With the other colonies, Rhode Island resisted the enforcement of the stamp act and the sale of stamps, but alone of all the colonies, Rhode Island met the armed vessels of the king and opposed the enforcement of regulations unjust to her commerce and in violation of her liberties. When she found the rights she believed she was entitled to violated, she resisted, and, educated through all her colonial history to act independently, she did not wait for any other colony to act with her. The story of the "Squirrel," the "Liberty" and the "Gaspee" were prior in time and displayed a courage, a purpose and an independence in resistance to Great Britain that no other colony equalled. Later, first of the colonies, Rhode Island declared her Independence.

The Gaspee commission, by which it was sought to carry colonial offenders to England, to be tried there, instead of by their peers, in the vicinage, involved so great a violation of the principles of Anglo-Saxon liberty and the rights claimed by all the colonists that it awoke a responsive chord in the Virginia House of Burgesses. Virginia, the richest of the colonies, with little direct grievance against the crown, threw its great influence in union with other colonies, and George Washington, following the action of his colony, made a successful revolution possible.

Recognizing the strategic importance of Narragansett bay, near to the centres of population, the British early

attacked its inhabitants and Wallace ravaged its shores. In December, 1776, Sir Peter Parker, with eleven ships of war and seventy transports, sailed through Long Island sound around the north end of Conanicut, and two English and two Hessian brigades under the command of Sir Henry Clinton with Earl Percy and Brigadier General Richard Prescott under him, landed on the island of Rhode Island, and in the succeeding years the people of this vicinity endured the hardships of war. This force, as compared with the American forces in the state, was overwhelming and the Americans could only withdraw and watch the enemy from the neighboring mainland.

War at its best is hard, and in the latter part of the eighteenth century, with hired mercenaries, the treatment of the non-combatants was most severe. Officers, who might have been more courteous to a foreign foe, against colonists and rebels seemed to go at times to the extremes of cruelty toward the weak and helpless. On Jamestown, while Wallace was directing the driving off of the cattle of the inhabitants, Martin was shot down in cold blood at his own door. During the British occupation of Rhode Island, especially after Clinton and Percy in succession had left, and the command fell to Prescott, every day brought tales of tyranny and oppression of innocent and defenseless people (their relatives, friends and countrymen) to the American forces stationed at Tiverton.

To the small boy in Newport, even to this day, the word "tyrant" conjures up the picture of General Prescott,

an irascible man, somewhat advanced in years, walking on the east side of Spring street, along the only stone sidewalk in the neighborhood of his headquarters at the Bannister house, on the corner of Pelham street, and striking off with his cane the hats of the careless youth who too slowly saluted the resplendent general, heedless if with his cane he missed the hat and struck the head of the young rebel. Next to George III himself, in July, 1777, Prescott represented to the people of Rhode Island that ideal tyrant so eloquently portrayed in the Declaration of Independence. One can well imagine how the sympathetic heart of the Rhode Island commander at Tiverton, facing a superior force, yearned to do some act that would show that tyrant, and all likely to imitate him that he could not oppress with impunity women and children.

William Barton was born at Warren, May 26, 1748, says his biographer, Mrs. Williams, in her interesting account gathered from his own lips and from those of this contemporaries; he was brought up in the manner of the times, for boys along the sea shore. He had a common school education, was bound out to a trade, married at twenty-two and carried on in his own shop at Providence the trade of a hatter. A lover of his country, listening with deep resentment to the wrongs of his fellow-citizens, he heard in Providence the distant guns of Bunker Hill. The next day he left his shop and joined the Americans at Cambridge, and continued through the siege of Boston. Then returning to Warren, enflamed by the cruel acts of Wallace, he remained to defend his native state.



While in charge on Rhode Island, Barton made his headquarters at the Bailey place, near the One Mile Corner. On the 13th of August, 1776, that staunch old patriot pastor, Ezra Stiles, records in his diary "at Newport, viewed the brigade of 1,500 men; part of them drawn up on the Parade and exercised by Major Barton."

It was during this period that he thoroughly familiarized himself with the different parts of the island, which was so useful to him later. With the advent of Sir Henry Clinton and the fleet, Barton withdrew his men to the mainland and remained in command, under Colonel Stanton, of the American force at Tiverton, guarding Howland's ferry and the east passage.

This force, recruited from New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, consisted of Colonel John Topham's and Colonel Archibald Crary's regiments and Colonel Robert Elliott's artillery. Here Barton did what he could to alleviate the sufferings of those who escaped from Prescott's tyranny, and listened to the stories of the oppression of old men and women by the British and Hessian regiments quartered among them.

About this time, the American forces were greatly annoyed by the capture of General Lee, who was held by the British and exchange refused because the American had no captive officer of equal rank to offer. They keenly felt it as a disgrace that an American officer of high rank should remain a prisoner unexchanged.

Colonel Barton, doomed to inactivity in the face of a superior foe, pondered over the situation of General Lee

and grieved at the oppression of his countrymen in Rhode Island. In June, a Mr. Coffin escaped from the island and brought to Barton an accurate and detailed description of the location of General Prescott here in the Overing house. A man, a negro servant from Mr. Overing's kitchen had later confirmed Mr. Coffin and it is probable that Colonel Barton himself had secretly, with his own eyes, viewed the disposition of the forces and the general situation about the Prescott headquarters.

Having obtained permission of Colonel Joseph Stanton, Jr., his superior, he determined to carry out the apparently desperate scheme he had conceived wholly by himself of by one bold act avenging the wrongs of his countrymen upon their oppressor and furnishing to the American a captive general of equal rank to General Lee and suitable for his exchange.

Besides himself, he selected five officers and about forty men from the regiments at Tiverton. They were all volunteers for an unknown peril, picked for their courage, skill and prudence; many of them residents of this island and vicinity, familiar with the location they were to visit. The names of many of these men are still borne on this island and in the neighboring towns—Samuel Potter, John Wilcox, John Hunt, Nathan Smith, Isaac Brown, Oliver Simmons, Jack Sherman, Joel Briggs, Samuel Cory, James Weaver, Joseph Dennis, Pardon Cory, Thomas Wilcox, Jeremiah Thomas, Thomas Austin and others.

On the first anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Barton, under cover of darkness, with his volunteers in five whale-boats, set forth and, scattered by a severe storm, were delayed at Warren. At Hog island they viewed the British fleet, gathered off the Rhode Island shore at the end of Prudence and not far from Hope island, and the men learned for the first time the desperate undertaking in which they were engaged. But no man faltered. Thence they pushed on to Warwick neck, where there was an American battery, and here they were again detained by the weather. On the evening of July 9, 1777, Barton, his officers and men embarked in their five boats on their perilous expedition, with those last wise instructions—to preserve the strictest order, to have no thought of plunder, to observe profound silence, and to take with them no spirituous liquors.

Barton, with a handkerchief on a ten-foot pole in the first boat, so that the others might follow, led the way. They rowed between Patience and Prudence and hugged the shore of Prudence as they passed around the south end of the island, close to the hostile fleet, hearing distinctly the sentinels calling, “all’s well.” Then they pushed directly for the Rhode Island shore, landing at the mouth of the creek under the shelter of a sand bluff. They left one man with each boat and pushed forward towards the Overing house, passing to the south of the Peleg Coggeshall place and up the ravine to the road.

All about lay the British forces. A little way off to the north, at the Redwood place, was General Smith, second in

command, and part of his force was stationed near; and just to the south of his house, in a building, were quartered a body of light horse. Twenty-five yards from the gate stood a sentry, alert but secure in the protection of a disciplined army and a formidable fleet against a discouraged and undisciplined foe.

General Prescott had returned late from a feast given by the Tory Bannister, supplied in part by the cargo of a rich prize brought into Newport that day, and was sleeping soundly on the first floor of the house. Major Barrington, Prescott's aide, Mr. Overing and his son comprised the remaining male occupants of the house.

Barton pushed boldly across the road from the ravine, directly towards the sentry. To his demand for the countersign, they asked if he had seen any deserters that night, all the time advancing, until John Hunt, the stalwart artilleryman from Portsmouth, seized and silenced the sentry and they entered the house. Of the five boat parties, one stayed on guard at the road, one each guarded the three doors of the house, on east, south and west sides. Barton and the other party entered the house, first arousing Overing and his son in the second story. Major Barrington was taken as he jumped from the window in the second story. The negro forced the locked door to the room in which Prescott was in bed, and Hunt seized the astonished general. Scantily dressed, without his shoes, Prescott and his aide were dragged, supported upon the shoulders of his captors, through the fields.



They started in a straight line for the shore, across a rye field. They pushed off from the shore, with their prisoners, soon followed by rockets and the alarm in the army and the fleet. No wonder Prescott exclaimed to Colonel Barton: "You have made a damned bold push tonight." As the boat passed in the darkness through the midst of the British fleet he must have felt that he did not deserve well at the hands of the Americans, as he said "he hoped they would not hurt him." Thomas Austin, who had been whipped by Prescott's orders with 300 lashes, because he refused to yoke his oxen with which to draw British cannon, until the physician protested he could not survive, was probably only one of others among Barton's men who either in person or their relatives had suffered ill treatment at Prescott's hands. Still Colonel Barton put his coat about him and Prescott was well cared for, and on the following Saturday, the flag of truce brought him his wardrobe, his purse, his hair powder and a plentiful supply of perfumery.

Thus was successfully accomplished one of the most daring feats of courage in the war. Professor Diman in his interesting discourse on the centennial anniversary of the event says: "Let us estimate at its true value the enterprise which we have come to commemorate to-day. An enterprise leading to no important military or political results, yet deserving to be kept forever in remembrance as showing what manner of men they were who dared hurl defiance in the face of a powerful empire and who



waged a successful war with resolute and highly disciplined foes. What they did, a hundred years of a united and independent nation remains to show; what they were, can best be learned from such exhibitions of individual daring and resolution as have made this a memorable spot not only in Rhode Island, but in American history.

Astonished at the audacity of the act, even the British had little sympathy with Prescott. The London Chronicle of that period even held him up to ridicule.

“What various lures there are to ruin man,  
 Women, the first and foremost, all bewitches.  
 A nymph thus spoiled a general's mighty plan,  
 And gave him to the foe without his breeches.”

His capture brought joy to the American people, as well as in Rhode Island, as relief from a coarse and oppressive tyrant, who had cursed Ethan Allen when his prisoner and had him bound hand and foot, and whose harsh and arbitrary rule at Newport had been most obnoxious to the patriots.

To the army of the north, the exploit occasioned great joy and exultation. It lifted for an instant the anxious cloud from Washington's face as he announced to Congress the “bold enterprise.” Even across the sea, Louis, King of France, was pleased and sent to Colonel Barton for a personal detailed account of the affair, for his pleasure and information.

Barton was made a brevet colonel in the continental line and subsequently received a sword voted by Congress.

The Rhode Island legislature expressed by resolution its appreciation of the brave act of its gallant citizen, and it is fitting that to-day the committee of the Historical Society, with means furnished by the General Assembly of the state, should mark in permanent form by lasting bronze this spot.

We like to think that this act of Barton's was one especially characteristic of those born and reared within the territory of this little state, among a people inured to a hardy life on the borders of the ocean, and independent in colors and education. Other states and neighboring Massachusetts, with their citizens trained to united action in the rigid school of religious uniformity, have accomplished much in the history of the nation, but it has especially belonged to those from Rhode Island in every stage of its history to act with courage and independence. Roger Williams, alone among the Indians with his idea of religious freedom; Barton, not weighing odds of numbers or discipline when he thought his country demanded the capture of a tyrannical enemy; Perry on Lake Erie, saving the northwest to the Union, are but examples.

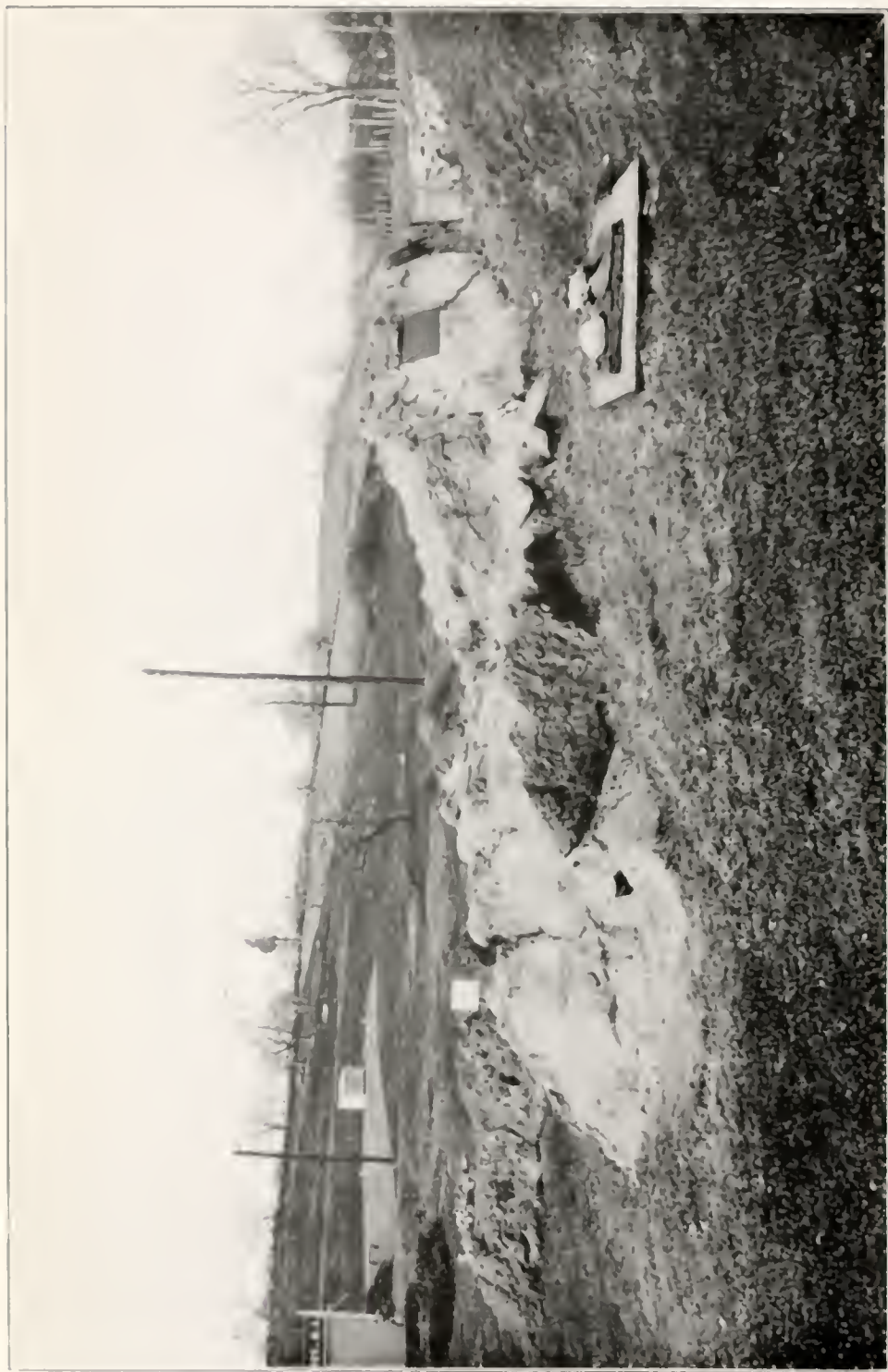
We can take new courage to-day, as we rehearse the incidents which here occurred. It must have seemed to Barton, as with his meagre, undisciplined force he faced the numerous forces, fully trained and equipped, of the British army in Rhode Island, protected by the fleet, that individual effort and courage could accomplish nothing; yet with great care, through knowledge

of the situation and a courageous execution of the plan he had conceived, he was able to seize the commander of that army, bringing consternation for a time to the enemy; keeping that enemy busy in Rhode Island while the American army in the north, inspirited by his act, persevered in that campaign which led to the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga.

To-day, in the larger field of our expanded nation, with the rush of pressing events and the vastly more complex forces at work, it seems that individual effort can accomplish nothing in the great problems of civil life and constitutional government. Still, we believe, as of old, the intelligent work and daring courage of the individual alone, make possible ultimate success.

WILLIAM PAINE SHEFFIELD, JR.





THE INDIAN SOAPSTONE QUARRY, JOHNSTON



## THE ADDRESS OF MR. DAVID W. HOYT

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At the Indian Quarry, October 17, 1908

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In expending the money appropriated by the State of Rhode Island, the Committee on marking historical sites have made selections relating to different periods, extending from prehistoric times down to the civil war. Some relate to the white settlers who founded the State; some to the colonial wars, the war of the revolution, or the civil war; others to individuals who have been eminent in the pursuits of peace, as well as of war. Of the thirteen tablets already placed, three pertain to the red race who occupied the land long before the white man came here. One, on the east side of the bay, marks the spring called by the name of Massasoit; another, on the west side of the bay, marks the "Drum Rock, a Trysting signal and meeting place of the Coweset Indians and their kindred Narragansetts." To-day we mark another notable Indian locality, north of the bay, one suggestive of the arts of peace, with which we do not so frequently associate our aboriginal predecessors.

Here is found a ledge of steatite, or soapstone, much of it containing imbedded crystals of siderite, or carbonate of iron. On weathering, the siderite absorbs oxygen and

moisture from the air, and disintegrates, yielding limonite, or iron rust, which gives its characteristic color to portions of the ledge long exposed to the air, and eventually disappears, leaving small pits, or holes, in the stone. In this respect it differs from many other specimens of soapstone; and articles made from it may often be thus identified. The stone of a pot now in the museum of Brown University, found at Potowomut, beneath ten feet of soil, is filled with such pits, showing unmistakably its origin. This ledge is reported to be about 25 feet in thickness, having a dip to the east, and lying between walls of harder rock. It has, at times, been uncovered for about 90 feet.

The quarry was first opened, in recent times, in 1878, by Mr. Horatio N. Angell, on whose land it was located. In 1878 and 1879 it attracted much attention. A committee of the R. I. Historical Society, consisting of Rev. Frederic Denison, Zachariah Allen and Wm. G. R. Mowry, examined the locality and made a report to the society, which has been preserved. It was also visited by F. W. Putnam, who published an account of it in the eleventh annual report of the Peabody Museum, in 1878. Professor Jenks, of Brown University, took four photographs, which have been preserved. It should be remembered that since the photographs were taken, and the earliest accounts were written, much stone has been taken from the ledge and put to various practical uses, some of it having been ground to powder. Moreover, the best specimens of the handiwork of the Indians have been

carried away, and are now to be found in the museums of Brown University, Roger Williams Park, Peabody, and the Smithsonian Institution; and in private collections.

Ledges of soapstone are quite common in New England, and the rock of these ledges is so soft and has such valuable properties that it has been worked in our own time for a variety of purposes; but the distinguishing peculiarity of this location is, that when the ledge was first uncovered the fullest evidence was found that it was the workshop of the Indians, who carved from this ledge of soft stone "pots, pans, dishes and pipes." It is stated, in the report to which we have referred, that "from the excavations and their surroundings have been removed about three hundred horse cart loads of the stone chips left by the Indian workmen." The largest excavation was found partly filled with dirt, debris and Indian art, some whole stone pots, some partly finished pots, some only blocked out, numerous stone hammers," etc. It was stated that "the sides and bottom of this excavation contain about sixty distinct pits and knobs of places where pots and dishes were cut from the rock, while all parts bore marks and scars made by the stone implements of the swarthy quarrymen."

Professor Putnam estimated that three or four hundred pots were made from one part of the ledge alone, and that "several thousand must have been taken from the whole ledge." He also estimated that at least two thousand rude stone chisels or picks "had been found on the ledge,

or in the immediate vicinity." These were made of serpentine or from the hard stone of the adjoining ledge, averaging about seven inches in length, "rudely chipped to a blunt point at one end, and roughly rounded to fit the hand at the other." With these chisels were found seventy-five to one hundred rounded stones "weighing from twenty-five to one hundred pounds each, which might have been used as hammers for the purpose of breaking off large masses of the soapstone."

Those who carefully studied the ledge when first uncovered decided that the Indians first worked the outside of the pot, the top still being in contact with the ledge. The stone of the ledge was chipped off around, and to some extent under the mass, or "pot-boulder," which was then broken from the ledge, turned over, and the hollow worked out.

This ledge is far from being uniform in character in its different parts. The soapstone is penetrated with harder rock in various places, so that only portions were found to be workable. There were, therefore, excavations of varying size, separated by harder rock. The soapstone itself was softer in some parts of the ledge than in others. The quarrymen seem to have worked the vein five or six feet in width, to a depth of ten or twelve feet, till harder rock was struck on the sides and on the bottom.

It seems probable that the upper portions, first worked, might have been composed of purer steatite, without the iron compound which made it less durable and less



desirable. A small soapstone pot, finely finished, now in the museum of Brown University, is almost wholly composed of pure steatite; but a portion of the top contains small pit holes which may indicate that in working it out the Indians may have struck a little of the lower stratum of this ledge, containing crystals of the iron compound.

It is worthy of note that in the same report of the Peabody Museum which contains the account of this Johnston quarry is found an account of a soapstone ledge in California, there called "potstone," near a spring, like this one, from which the Indians quarried pots and other utensils, with scrapers or chisels of quartz or slate. The method of working out the pots was identical with that employed here; but the utensils were of better finish and of later date.

Soon after this Johnston quarry was uncovered, one at Fed Hill, Bristol, Conn., was explored, and many dishes were found there, in various stages of manufacture. The methods of work were in general like those employed here. The outside of the pot was fashioned first, while the top was attached to a block detached from the ledge, instead of being attached to the ledge itself. It is suggested that this variation was because the "soapstone-like" material was poorer for the purpose, being a variety of fibrous hornblende, with talc.

Somewhat similar ledges and quarries, or "crockery-shops," have been reported in New Hartford and Litchfield, Conn., in Massachusetts; and, outside of New



England, in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and other states. The one which we now mark, however, seems to be superior in value to any other New England pot-quarry, in processes of manufacture which it has preserved. The historian Hutchison states that "the Narragansetts were distinguished for mechanical arts and trade, and furnished earthen vessels and pots for cooking to the adjacent tribes."

The Indians made the most suitable choice of location and material for their purposes. Located at the head of Narragansett bay, there was easy communication with both east and west sides of the bay, and with the north. In this respect, this ledge is typical of the manufactures of our own day which have grown up in the same vicinity. Soapstone is soft and was easily worked with the tools which they possessed. It would stand any amount of heat which they required for cooking, and retain the heat for a long time, without cracking to pieces like a quartz rock, or turning to powder like limestone.

The report of the committee of the Rhode Island Historical Society, to which we have referred, contained a recommendation that the "large excavation" be preserved by taking "a section of the ledge, to measure about twelve feet in length and nine feet in width, and seven feet in depth, or of such size as may seem to be most suitable," and removing it to some spot in Roger Williams Park," on a slope within sight, at least, of the statue of the founder of the State." In December, 1879, "the

citizens of Providence and of the State" were asked to contribute the sum of six hundred dollars for the purpose of carrying this plan into effect. Probably the plan was not carried out on account of the lack of funds, for at least a portion of the "large excavation" is still here. Let us hope that whatever now remains, that is plainly the work of the Indian race, may be allowed to remain here, undefaced, just where the work was done.

DAVID W. HOYT

## STEPHEN HOPKINS

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Address by William E. Foster, May 5, 1909

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We are met to-day to commemorate a name richly deserving of grateful remembrance, and yet strangely destitute, through all these years, of any adequate commemoration. Until now, no statue nor bust, nor portrait nor tablet, have been set in place, to the memory of Stephen Hopkins, within the limits of Rhode Island.

It is true that the memory of a great man may endure notwithstanding the absence of these memorials; and to this fact the wide fame of Stephen Hopkins to-day is itself a notable testimony. And yet a community honors itself in honoring those whose efforts have laid the foundation of its own greatness; and Stephen Hopkins is emphatically entitled to the high distinction of founder, whether we regard his career in its relation to the City of Providence, the State of Rhode Island, or the United States of America.

For us, moreover, the tablet is the most fitting variety of commemoration, rather than any form of pictorial representation, for unfortunately Stephen Hopkins left behind him no portrait; and the representation of him familiar to us through Trumbull's great group picture of the "Signers" was sketched from his son's face.



THE STEPHEN HOPKINS HOUSE, HOPKINS STREET, PROVIDENCE





It is fitting also that the memorial tablet should be placed on the walls of this plain and unassuming building which Hopkins occupied for so many years; for by its very simplicity it cannot fail to remind us of the homely virtues of one of the greatest of our public men.

As citizens of Providence, we are interested not only in this building, in which the last forty-three years of Stephen Hopkins's long and useful life were passed, and in which, moreover, he died, in 1785, but we are interested also in his birth, which occurred in 1707, but on the other side of the river. Contrary to a curiously persistent tradition, to the effect that Stephen Hopkins was born on the hills of Scituate, he was born within the limits of what is now (in 1909) the City of Providence, not far from the corner of Broad and Sackett streets, as was clearly established through some extended researches\* from twenty-five to thirty years ago. This locality is included in a strip of land which was from 1754 to 1868 a portion of the town of Cranston,† and was re-united to Providence in 1868.

In or about 1742, after a boyhood and early manhood passed on the Scituate hills, where his younger brothers were actually born (Scituate having become a separate town in 1731), Stephen Hopkins removed to the parent community of Providence, to occupy this house. At that time Providence was still a small and uninfluential community. The first century of its settlement had closed only six years before, in 1736, and its influence was still

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\*See W. E. Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," V. 1, p. 9-10; V. 2, p. 209, 215-17.

†Ibid., V. 1, p. 9.

of minor importance, as compared with that of Newport, in the affairs of the Colony. To quote from what has been written elsewhere,—“It had no custom-house (and no great development of commerce, as yet); no post-office; no town-house; no school-houses; no college; no library; no public market-house; no state-house; no bank nor insurance office; no printing press and no newspaper.”\* The first bank, the first insurance office, and the first custom-house came into existence after Hopkins's death† (though his own labors were largely responsible for bringing them into existence), but with most of the other activities just enumerated the historian of Providence finds that Stephen Hopkins was closely connected, as an active founder. After this length of time, in the year 1909, concerned as we are with the multiform activities of this city of more than 200,000 people, while we recognize in Roger Williams the planter of the infant community, we may also recognize in Stephen Hopkins the man who laid the foundation of its greatness.

One of his contemporaries, Asher Robbins, who had carefully studied his influence, wrote of him, after his death, that he was one of those “men who might say, as Themistocles said: ‘True, I do not understand the art of music, and cannot play upon the flute; but I understand the art of raising a small village into a great city.’ ”‡

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\*Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," V. 1, p. 86, 87.

†Ibid., v. 1, p. 87.

‡Ibid., v. 2, p. 114. (In Providence Journal, August 8, 1836.)

Most fittingly, therefore, do we to-day, as citizens of Providence, set up this tablet in grateful commemoration of the services of Stephen Hopkins.

But we are also citizens of the State of Rhode Island, as well as of the City of Providence; and this suggests another aspect of Hopkins's career. To each branch of the government of the colony,—legislative, judicial and executive,—he gave many years of service, and in each one of these he rose to the head. As early as 1741, while in the General Assembly, he was elected Speaker. As early as 1751, he became Chief Justice of the Superior Court. As early as 1755, he was elected Governor and he was, as stated on the tablet which is now set up, "ten times Governor of Rhode Island." In nine of these instances he was elected in the usual way, the other instance being due to the need of filling a vacancy. On the 13th of March, 1758, the General Assembly chose Stephen Hopkins as Governor, to fill the unexpired term (about two months) of the late Governor William Greene, who had died in February, 1758. In the internecine warfare of the Ward and Hopkins contests, there is much on which we of the present day cannot dwell with pleasure, but in the approaching contest with Great Britain, his words have an inspiring ring. It was in 1773, during the proceedings in connection with the burning of the Gaspee, that he made the determined announcement, as Chief Justice: I will "neither apprehend by my own order, nor suffer any executive officer to do it,"\*—thus effectually blocking

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\*Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2, p. 95. (From letter of Ezra Stiles, February 16, 1773. )

the transportation to England of any citizens of Rhode Island. Moreover, while he was thus conserving the right of the individual citizen of the colony of Rhode Island, he was also ensuring the continued existence of this colony, in its separate form, at the time when one of the Royal Commissioners was recommending that it should be "consolidated with Connecticut."

As citizens of Rhode Island, then, do we set up this tablet in grateful commemoration of the services of Stephen Hopkins.

And yet after all, Hopkins's chief distinction rests upon the wider service which he rendered, in the formation of the republic of the United States.

It is one of the "commonplaces of history," so far as we in Rhode Island are concerned, that "Stephen Hopkins signed the Declaration of Independence." But so did fifty-four other Americans, of varying degrees of eminence. But while Hopkins was performing a great public service in the seventies (i. e., in the Eighteenth Century), so he was also in the fifties and in the sixties. Parenthetically, it may be said that Stephen Hopkins, born in the earliest decade of the Eighteenth Century (in 1707), was, in 1776, in his seventieth year, with the active portion of his life already behind him, rather than in front of him as was the case with Thomas Jefferson, and various other members of the Continental Congress. In so brief and condensed an inscription as this (and an inscription ought always to be brief and condensed) there is not, of course, room to



record his participation in the Albany Congress of 1754.\* This was the conference in which seven of the American colonies participated; and among the delegates were Benjamin Franklin and Stephen Hopkins,—two patriotic and public spirited Americans, who were not only closely contemporary with each other, so far as the dates of their birth and death are concerned, but between whom there is an astonishing degree of resemblance, so far as their habit of mind, point of view, and participation in public movements are concerned. The “plan of union” proposed by this congress, was brought forward by Franklin, and was approved by Hopkins, both by tongue and pen. This plan, says Judge Prince, was “in advance of the Articles” (of Confederation) “in its national spirit, and served as the prototype of the Constitution itself.”† The very noteworthy pamphlet published by Stephen Hopkins, here in Providence, in 1755, after his return from congress (“a true representation of the plan formed at Albany”),‡ is the only instance of a printed exposition of this kind on the part of any member of the congress. The “national” principle in it, as distinguished from the individualistic principle, was one which plainly appealed to Hopkins’s type of mind.

Ten years later, when the stamp act was under discussion, throughout the length and breadth of the American colonies, Stephen Hopkins put into print his carefully

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\*Foster’s “Stephen Hopkins,” v. 1, chapter 6.

†L. B. Prince’s “The article of Confederation vs. the Constitution,” p. 19.

‡Foster’s “Stephen Hopkins,” v. 2, p. 199-200.



reasoned argument on "The rights of colonies examined."\* As is well known, these few years, from 1764 to 1767, were prolific in pamphlets of this kind dealing with colonial conditions. But when so intelligent (and at the same time, unfriendly), an observer as Governor Thomas Hutchinson, of the Massachusetts Bay Province, the eminent loyalist, remarked of Hopkins's pamphlet, that this was "conceived in a higher strain than any (memorials) that were sent out by the other colonies,"† he expressed an accurate judgment. "It rose higher," to quote from language published elsewhere,‡ "and at the same time struck deeper, because it was a carefully considered expression of the extreme ground occupied by one of the two charter colonies." The phraseology of this pamphlet's title is worthy of careful attention. It is not (as it is sometimes quoted), "Rights of the colonies examined," but "The rights of colonies examined." Hopkins does not confine his consideration of the subject to the existing conditions, but going back to the beginning, he examines the conditions of colonies in general, and is thus enabled to make a telling and impressive argument. It should not be overlooked, moreover, that this was an argument proceeding from a colony which had still retained its charter. The charter colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island, says the late Alexander Johnston, "held for more than a century the extreme advanced ground, to which all

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\*Ibid., v. 2, p. 200.

†Hutchinson's "Massachusetts Bay," v. 2, p. 115.

‡Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2, p. 68.

the other commonwealths came up in 1775." The position of such a colony, he adds, "kept alive the general sense of the inherent colonial rights which only waited for assertion, upon the inevitable growth of colonial power."\* At least two editions were published here in Providence, but so great was the demand for it, that it was soon after reprinted elsewhere. William Goddard, the Providence printer of that day, stated, in the Providence Gazette, that it was "reprinted from the Providence edition in almost every colony in North America."† And wherever it was printed, says Mr. Frothingham, the historian of this period, it "met with large commendation."‡ In 1776, after it had about two years of careful reading from the colonial leaders, it was reprinted in England, by John Almon, the London printer. The London reprint appeared with an altered title, namely, "The grievances of the American colonies candidly examined;"§ and the late Moses Coit Tyler, in his "Literary history of the American Revolution," remarks that "This English alteration in the title was in itself a tribute to the author."\*\*

There is one sentence in the letter of a New York merchant of the time, written in commendation of Hopkins's pamphlet, which is worth noticing, for the

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\*Johnston's "The genesis of a New England State," p. 29.

†Providence Gazette, May 11, 1765.

‡Frothingham's "The rise of the republic," p. 172.

§Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2, p. 201.

\*\*Tyler's "Literary history of the American Revolution," v. 1, p. 65.

significant use which it makes of the term, "this country."\*

"Even thus early the people in whose minds Franklin and Hopkins were dropping the seeds of union and nationality were learning to talk of a common country."

Rhode Island herself had learned the lesson well,—at least, so far as the tendencies towards union and independence were concerned. To quote once more from the published "Life" of Hopkins, "She was the first colony to instruct her delegates against the stamp act, the only one whose governor refused to take the oath to enforce it; the only colony from which came any printed defense of the Albany plan of union in 1754; the colony from which came the first official call for a congress in 1765; the first colony to call for a Continental Congress in 1774, and the earliest to elect her delegates to the first Continental Congress; the colony in which the first overt act of resistance to Great Britain had occurred; the state which had anticipated by two months the passage of the Declaration of Independence by the Congress (the event whose anniversary was celebrated in this city yesterday); the state, moreover, which had anticipated the general government, in adopting a general postal system, and in raising and equipping a naval armament for national defense; and finally, the state through whose direct motion these latter functions, unquestionably national as they were, had been assumed by the general government."†

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\*Printed in Boston Evening Post, March 25, 1765.

†Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2, p. 148-49.

On two accounts the historical student finds occasion for keen regret that Stephen Hopkins's active days (and in particular his original physical vigor) had passed, before the critical period extending from the Declaration of Independence to the adoption of the Constitution in 1787. (Indeed, when the latter event came on, Stephen Hopkins had already been in his grave for two years.)

The first of these occasions for regret is in connection with his career in congress, where his efforts were largely paralyzed by almost continuous ill health. And yet, even as it is, the record of his services in congress is a long and crowded one,\* and it is especially noteworthy in connection with the movement made to assume national functions, in the matter of a navy† and of a postal service.

The second of these occasions for regret is in connection with the attitude of Rhode Island towards the adoption of the Federal Constitution. "Speculation," in historical matters, is usually fruitless; and the present instance is no exception to the general rule. And yet, when we recall how Hopkins's successful leadership of public opinion was at all times a distinguishing feature of his public career, and when we also remember how closely he had been identified, from the beginning, with the national, as distinguished from the particularistic view of government, we need not hesitate to conclude that Rhode Island's attitude, in the years 1785 to 1790, would have been

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\*It occupied four pages, even in the condensed form in which it appears, in Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2, p. 237-41.

†Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2, p. 234-36.



materially modified if he had been alive and in vigor of his early career.

But, without giving further consideration to regrets,—unavailing and fruitless as they are,—there is enough in this phase of Stephen Hopkins's career, the national phase, to confer on him no common distinction.

Not only, therefore, as citizens of Providence, and of Rhode Island, but as citizens of the United States, do we set up this tablet in grateful commemoration of the services of Stephen Hopkins.

The house itself, to which the tablet is affixed, although not of the greatest antiquity, is of considerable interest. As indicated on the tablet, the site on which it now stands is not its original location; and yet we have good ground for thankfulness that its removal in 1804 transferred it to a position only a few feet away from its former site at the foot of the hill, where it occupied what, at the end of the Eighteenth Century, was the corner of the Town street and Bank Lane.\* Here, not far from the wharves and the shipping, with which so large a part of Stephen Hopkins's activities were concerned, and in the development of which he and his family played so important a part,† stood this plain, dignified and comfortable house of the olden time.

If its aged walls could speak, they would tell us of many a distinguished guest entertained here, including George

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\*Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 1, p. 81.

†Ibid., v. 1, p. 99-100.



Washington, the greatest of them all, in April, 1776.\* They would speak of the conferences, formal and informal, held here, which led to the founding of a college, which led to the founding of the Providence Library in or about 1754, or which led to the improvement of the town's business facilities.

Within its walls Stephen Hopkins himself carried on his own studies and pursued his own wide range of reading. Few men have ever digested so perfectly the results of their reading, and except for the sage and meditative mood in which this reading was pursued, with ample time for reflection on what he read, he would not have extorted from John Adams, late in life, his admiring comments on the results of this Rhode Islander's reading and studies.†

We place then this tablet on the walls of no ordinary house, with the hope and expectations that it may transmit to generations yet to come the memory of one of the greatest of Rhode Islanders.

WILLIAM E. FOSTER.

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\*Ibid., v. 2, p. 113-14.

†"Works" of John Adams, v. 3, p. 11-12.

## GENERAL NATHANAEEL GREENE HOUSE, CUMBERLAND

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The Address of William MacDonald

June 24, 1909

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Professor William MacDonald, speaking informally of the life and work of General Greene, quoted the remark of Jared Sparks, the American historian, that Greene was "the most extraordinary man in the army of the Revolution," and sketched briefly the story of Greene's life from the time when, as a private soldier, he joined the army at Cambridge.

Greene came of distinguished parentage, having the inestimable advantage of being well born. His love of a military life forced him out of the Quaker sect in which he was bred, and led him to read widely and to good purpose in such military literature as he could get hold of; and he was noted as the best read officer in the army on military history and military science, as well as in the law of nations. He was an organizer of the Kentish Guards at East Greenwich, a man of sound judgment in business matters, a member of the colonial assembly, and a member of the commission to revise the military laws of the colony.



THE GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE HOUSE, COVENTRY



It was Greene's misfortune never to win an important battle, but he bore the disappointment without complaining, and his reputation as a commander rose rather than fell with every engagement that he fought. He early formed a profound admiration for Washington, which was returned in full measure; and none of the generals of the revolution stood on such intimate terms with Washington. Washington's opinion of his worth was well illustrated in his selection of Greene to take command in the south when, as he said, he was unable to give detailed instructions because of lack of information regarding conditions, but must leave Greene to follow his own judgment. The large number of officers of high rank who desired to accompany him to the south was another proof of the worth in which he was held by his military associates. Historians of the revolution have agreed in praising the brilliancy of Greene's campaigns in the south, and to him must be ascribed the principal credit for driving the British from that region and thus preparing the way for Yorktown; but he must be accorded almost equal credit for the skill with which he managed the leaders of the partisan bands, Marion, Sumter, Pickens, and others.

Greene had a hasty temper, and a habit of criticising his associates and superiors which more than once got him into trouble, and often caused his motives to be misunderstood. What distinguished him above his fellows, however, was his studiousness, his willingness to serve the



American cause in any capacity, however humble, his careful attention to the details of command, his unbroken loyalty to Washington, and his confidence in the final success of the patriot cause. The deliberate judgment of historians has unhesitatingly placed him next to Washington among the revolutionary leaders; while among the public men of Rhode Island, he is easily the most distinguished.

WILLIAM MACDONALD.





The Esk Hopkins House, Providence

## ESEK HOPKINS

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The Address of Nathan W. Littlefield, Esq., October 27, 1909

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We have assembled to-day to dedicate a memorial tablet in honor of Esek Hopkins, first commander-in-chief of the American navy.

The tablet states that Esek Hopkins, 1718-1802, first commander-in-chief of the American navy lived in this house.

It commemorates a historic fact well deserving public attention. For, however men may differ in their estimation of the ability and energy of the man thus honored, there can be no question that the American navy had its inception in idea and fact in Rhode Island, and that Esek Hopkins was one of its leading advocates and promoters and its first commander-in-chief.

It is the fortune of some men to be extravagantly praised and extravagantly blamed and criticised during their lifetime and after. Esek Hopkins has thus suffered by the partiality of well meaning friends and the hostility of enemies and unfriendly critics.

Somewhere between these extremes of praise and criticism lies the proper and just estimate of his character and achievements.

If he was not a great military or naval hero like Perry, Farragut and Dewey, neither was he the pusillanimous selfseeker which some have labored to prove him.

Amid a mass of conflicting evidence, it is my task and will be my endeavor to find and portray the real Esek Hopkins.

First of all he was well born. The Hopkins family of Rhode Island is as ancient as the colony itself. Thomas Hopkins was the associate of Roger Williams at its planting. The family was distinguished for learning, ability and public spirit.

Stephen Hopkins, governor of the colony, chief justice of the Supreme Court, member of the Continental Congress and signer of the Declaration of Independence, was one of America's greatest statesmen, a man who shone at the bar and upon the bench, in the counsels of the colony, and of the nation and in the company of wits and learned men.

John Adams, who was one of those who were delighted with Stephen Hopkins's wit, wisdom and erudition, has drawn a charming picture of him among his friends. In the maternal line Esek Hopkins was a member of the Wilkinson and Wickenden families, both conspicuous in the annals of the colony and state for learning and ability. Family traditions and example, therefore,—most powerful influences in the formation of character,—favored and stimulated his intellectual and moral development. He became well educated, judged by the standards of his time, especially in mathematics.



In person he appears to have been large and commanding, having a strong, expressive and agreeable countenance.

He was fond of society and his genial disposition and ready wit made him a leader in the social life of his time.

He was fortunate in having been born and reared upon a farm on the healthgiving highlands, now a part of Scituate, yet near enough to the sea to hear its persuasive call to strong, ambitious, enterprising men.

At the age of twenty, he shipped as a raw hand on a vessel bound from Providence to Surinam. Very soon he was in command of a vessel and rapidly acquired reputation as a skillful captain and merchant. Three of his brothers, William, John and Samuel, were famous sea captains, but Esek surpassed them all in enterprise and business sagacity.

Before he was forty years of age he was in command of a fleet of seventeen merchantmen controlled and mostly owned by the Hopkins family.

On November 28, 1741, being then twenty-three years of age he married Desire Burroughs, daughter of Ezekiel Burroughs, a leading merchant and one of the most influential citizens of Newport. He made Newport his home thereafter until 1752 or 1755. Newport at that time was a place of some seven thousand inhabitants and the most important seaport in the country. Its commerce extended to Africa, China and India.

To the profits of regular commerce her merchants added great fortunes from privateering, especially during the

French and Spanish wars. It is certain that some of the captains of privateers were not given to making nice distinctions regarding the nationality of their captures.

Esek Hopkins engaged in privateering with courage, skill and success, but with a strict regard for the rights of neutrals. There is no stain of freebooting upon his record.

Several times he acquired fortunes and had them swept away by the vicissitudes of business and war, yet he finally accumulated a large estate to comfort his declining years and enrich his children. He suffered, also in his later life greater misfortunes than losses of wealth,—the ruin of a fine reputation. Yet even this he endured with singular equanimity and cheerful fortitude.

If adversity be a test of character, it must be admitted that Ezek Hopkins when tried as by fire showed no base metal in his composition.

Soon after his return to Providence he acquired by several purchases a farm of about 200 acres in the northern part of the town where he resided during the remainder of his life. The sea and the farm appear to have equally shared his affection. He had also the capacity for friendship, and his home was the seat of a generous hospitality where his many friends delighted to gather.

This love of the sea and the farm and the society of his friends reveals a broad and noble nature. It is difficult to believe that a man of such affection could have been petty, mean, or ignoble.

Having acquired the confidence and esteem of his fellow citizens by his business ability and integrity and his large

experience in important affairs closely related to the public welfare he almost necessarily became prominent in public life.

Ambitious he probably was. But ambition has never been deemed a grievous fault in this country. Was his ambition honorable or base, was it selfish or patriotic,—that is the question, the answer to which must be sought in his attitude on public questions, his written and spoken words and his aim and purpose,—not his success in office.

It is significant that the first office which he held was as a member of a committee chosen to have the care of the “townes schole and of appointing a schole master” and the last was that of trustee of Rhode Island College, which he held during the last twenty years of his life.

The abiding interest in the case of education thus displayed indicates a mind and purpose of high order.

As a member of the general assembly of the colony from May, 1762, to October, 1764, when he resigned the office to again follow the sea, he received the support of the leading citizens of the colony and maintained an honorable standing in that body.

From 1764 to 1768 he was mostly engaged in long voyages to the far east. On his return he was elected a member of the general assembly for North Providence, which had been set off from Providence during his absence.

Again in 1771, he represented the town in the general assembly, and for three years thereafter was returned as the first deputy from that town. He was then fifty-three

years of age, about thirty-five of which he had passed upon the sea. He had gained an ample fortune and probably intended to retire from active business pursuits and pass his remaining years upon his farm with his family and among his friends.

Thus far his life had been unusually fortunate and happy.

His renown as an experienced and successful merchant and commander of ships extended throughout the commercial world. He was respected, trusted, honored. Therefore, when hostilities broke out between the colonies and England, it was natural that Rhode Island first and then all the colonies should turn to him as a leader and commander. He was first elected commander-in-chief of the forces of the colony and rendered valuable and efficient service in fortifying the approaches to Providence, and in preventing the destruction of Newport by wise negotiations with the commander of the British fleet.

On August 26, 1775, the General Assembly of Rhode Island instructed their delegates "to use their whole influence, at the ensuing Congress, for building at the continental expense, a fleet of sufficient force for the protection of these colonies." To Rhode Island is due the credit and distinction of originating a plan for constructing a navy for the defense of the colonies. The "Rhode Island plan" as it was called met, however, with great opposition in the debates which followed the presentation of the resolutions of the General Assembly to Congress.



The delegates from Massachusetts and Connecticut warmly supported the measure, those from Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina opposed it.

It is significant that the alignment was practically the same when afterwards the commander-in-chief of the navy was censured by Congress.

In October, 1775, Congress appointed a marine committee of seven members to consider the building of a navy. Stephen Hopkins was chairman of the committee and John Adams, Richard Henry Lee, Christopher Gadsen and Silas Deane were among its members.

John Adams in his memoirs says, "The pleasantest part of the labors for the four years I spent in Congress was in the committee on naval affairs." It was a strong committee. Its members were deeply interested in the success of the new navy.

When, therefore, on November 5, 1775, they unanimously chose Esek Hopkins commander-in-chief of the fleet which by direction of Congress they were fitting out, it is certain that they made the best selection possible in their judgment.

Though Stephen Hopkins was the chairman of that committee and undoubtedly interested in the welfare of his brother, it is incredible that his judgment should have been warped by favoritism or that the other strong men of the committee would have unanimously concurred in making an appointment which they did not believe to be for the best interest of the country.



Is it probable that a man who in a letter to his brother regarding his appointment used this language, "I suppose you may be more serviceable to your country in this very dangerous crisis of its affairs by taking upon you this command than in any other way" was capable of imperilling the safety of his country in his desire for his brother's promotion?

The charge of favoritism assumed that there were other men of greater experience and reputation in naval affairs. Who were they?

It is a matter of history that Rhode Island led all the colonies in commerce and in privateering. She had several able captains engaged in these occupations, but Esek Hopkins in his service of about thirty-five years upon the sea had acquired a reputation for skill, sagacity and courage superior to all others.

The appointment was well received by those best qualified to judge of its fitness, the captains and other officers of the fleet.

Great things were expected of Esek Hopkins and the little fleet of eight vessels when at Philadelphia, on a clear frosty morning of January, 1776, he stepped on board his flag ship, the Alfred, and first lieutenant John Paul Jones at a signal from Captain Saltonstall hoisted the first flag of the American navy, a yellow silk flag displaying a lively representation of a rattlesnake about to strike and the motto "Don't tread on me."

That these expectations were only partly fulfilled must be admitted. That the fleet under the command of

Admiral Hopkins accomplished much is also true. The failure to meet the anticipations of Congress and the people may have been due to their overestimate of the strength of the fleet, or a lack of knowledge of the difficulties and obstacles which it had to meet, or the incompetence of its commander, or a combination of some or all of these conditions.

The friends of Hopkins attributed his lack of complete success to the existence of difficulties and obstacles which no skill or daring could overcome. His enemies declared that it was due to incompetence and disobedience of the orders of the marine committee. What are the facts?

When the fleet sailed out on the 17th of February, 1776, Hopkins had orders from the marine committee to seek out and attack the enemies' ships in Chesapeake bay and on the coast of North and South Carolina and then to proceed to Rhode Island and destroy the British fleet there. But his orders dated January 5, 1776, also contained this sentence. "Notwithstanding these particular orders which it is hoped you will be able to execute if bad winds or stormy weather or any other unforeseen accident or disaster disable you so to do then you are to follow such courses as your best judgment shall suggest to you as most useful to the American cause and to distress the enemy by all means in your power."

Soon after the sailing severe sickness broke out among the officers and men of the fleet. Fierce northeasterly storms were encountered. The enemies' ships had sought

refuge in the harbors. To approach the coast and sail into harbors occupied by hostile fleets in such storms, was to offer the enemy an advantage which the commander did not deem it prudent to give. His orders left much to his discretion and covered just such an emergency. There was the greatest need of powder for the use of the army. It was known to the marine committee and to Hopkins before he sailed that there were large stores of powder and other munitions of war at New Providence in the Bahamas. It is probable, to say the least, that it was expected by the marine committee that an attempt would be made to capture these stores, if the main object of the expedition could not be accomplished. Hopkins used the discretion permitted him by his orders, sailed to New Providence and seized such an amount of cannon, small arms, ammunition and other articles that it required two weeks to transfer them to his ships and to a hired transport, all which were deeply loaded with the spoils. On his return north he captured near the east end of Long Island two small armed vessels one of which contained a large amount of ammunition, arms and stores. About one o'clock the next morning while the deeply laden fleet was slowly working its way eastward in a light wind they encountered the British frigate Glasgow. The Cabot, commanded by Captain John B. Hopkins, began the engagement as soon as it got within range of the enemy. A fierce battle followed in which one after another of the American ships were engaged. The flagship Alfred after

three hours of fighting was disabled by a shot which crippled her steering gear and put her out of the conflict. About half past six in the morning the Glasgow crowded on sail, eluded her pursuers and bore away for Newport. The captain of the Glasgow undoubtedly handled his ship bravely and skillfully, but he was greatly favored by the light winds which prevailed during the conflict by which the deeply laden ships of his opponents were badly handicapped in their movements.

Would it have been prudent for Hopkins to have continued the pursuit with his heavily laden ships, with crews diminished by sickness and the manning of his prizes, with the certainty of meeting the British fleet coming out from Newport able to outsail and outmaneuver him by reason of their lighter loading?

The answer to this question will determine whether Hopkins was blameworthy in this action.

John Paul Jones, in his entry for the day in the log book of the Alfred, says that the Glasgow at third glass "by crowding on all sail bore away and at length got a considerable way ahead, made signals for the rest of the English fleet, at Rhode Island, to come to her assistance and steered directly for the harbor. The commander then thought it imprudent to risk the prizes by pursuing further; therefore, to prevent our being decoyed into their hands, at half past six made signal to leave off the chase." He also says that "an unlucky shot carried away the wheel block and ropes," and that "the ship became



unmanageable, and leaking, the main mast shot through and the upper works and rigging badly damaged."

Neither at that time nor at any later time did John Paul Jones question the ability or the courage of Commander Hopkins. In a letter to Joseph Hewes of the Committee of Naval Affairs the same brave and outspoken officer says, "I have the pleasure of assuring you that the commander-in-chief is respected through the fleet, and I verily believe that the officers and men would go any length to execute his orders." It is evident that John Paul Jones attached no blame to the commander and his opinion ought to satisfy any reasonable man on this point. The exploit of Commander Hopkins at New Providence was hailed with rejoicing throughout the country. John Hancock, its president, in the name of Congress, congratulated him on the success of his expedition and added "Though it is to be regretted that the Glasgow made her escape, yet as it was not due to any misconduct, the praise due you and the other officers is undoubtedly the same." Unfortunately, however, dissensions arose among the captains and officers of the fleet by reason of the Glasgow escape. Captain Abraham Whipple of the Columbus demanded an investigation by court martial of charges of cowardice which were made against him by some of his fellow officers and was acquitted. Captain Hazard of the Providence was found guilty by court martial of misconduct in the engagement and was relieved of his command in which he was succeeded by John Paul Jones. These



proceedings gave prominence to an incident which otherwise would probably have received little attention from the country. When the fleet put into New London after the engagement upwards of two hundred sick men from the various ships were sent ashore. Hopkins landed some of the captured guns there and sent some to Dartmouth, Mass., and to Newport. Subsequent events showed that it would have been wiser for Hopkins to have returned to Philadelphia instead of proceeding to New London with his fleet. Less independence on his part and greater subservience to the authorities at Philadelphia would have won favor which afterwards he sorely needed.

Having secured one hundred and seventy recruits from the army he sailed for Providence on April 24, 1776, where he was making preparations for another cruise when the recruits were withdrawn. Sickness still prevailed in the fleet and one hundred more men unfit for duty were landed. Troubles accumulated. The wages of the sailors and marines were unpaid. They became dissatisfied and disheartened. The commander could not obtain money from the authorities to pay them. Discipline in the fleet also was lax from lack of sufficient authority in the commander. At this time he wrote to Congress, "I am ready to follow any instructions that you may give at all times, but am very much in doubt whether it will be in my power to keep the fleet together with any credit to myself or to the officers that belong to it without power to dismiss such officers as I find slack in their duty." But he was not given this power.

Another cause which operated powerfully against Hopkins's success in manning his fleet was privateering. Many of the merchants of Rhode Island were engaged in this profitable business. The rewards of this service were much greater than those of the navy. It was found impossible to enlist men for the navy against the superior inducement of private service.

Hopkins appealed to the General Assembly to lay an embargo on privateering. He labored at one time among the members to secure the passage of an act of that kind, but some of them were interested in the business and selfish interests prevailed and the measure was defeated by two votes. He had also still further antagonized certain powerful men by exposing and fiercely denouncing their improper conduct in building two frigates for the government. Under such circumstances Hopkins was summoned before Congress to answer charges of disobedience of orders on his southern cruise. His answer to the charges is marked by good temper and sound reason. In passing judgment on this matter it should not be forgotten that envy and jealousy and sectional feeling were prevalent; that Washington himself was bitterly assailed and accused of inaction and incompetence and nearly ruined by the same causes which were operating against Hopkins.

John Adams earnestly defended Hopkins when the charges were considered by Congress. Admitting that the commander-in-chief might have committed some

error through inexperience in handling a fleet, he stoutly denied that there was anything in Hopkins's conduct which indicated corruption or want of integrity. Adams says in a letter written shortly after, "On this occasion I had a very laborious task against all the prejudices of the gentlemen from the southern and middle states and of many from New England. I thought, however, that Hopkins had done great service and made an important beginning of naval operations.

It appeared to me that the Commodore was pursued and persecuted by that anti-New England spirit which haunted Congress in many of their other proceedings as well as in this case and that of General Wooster.

Experience and skill might have been deficient in several particulars, but where could we find greater experience or skill. I knew of none to be found. The other captains had not so much and it was afterward found that they had not so much."

This is the most important evidence given by a member of the Marine Committee who was greatly interested in the success of the navy. Congress passed a vote of censure upon Hopkins, not because he had displayed lack of skill or experience or courage, but specifically because he "did not pay due regard to the terms of his instructions" upon his southern cruise, in which instructions they had expressly allowed him much latitude of discretion. It has been argued that in defending Hopkins, John Adams was defending himself, because Adams was a member of the

committee which made Hopkins commander-in-chief of the navy. This assumes that Adams had greater regard for Hopkins's reputation than for the welfare of the navy and the country. Is it not more likely that Adams would be tempted to make a scapegoat of Hopkins in order to shield himself and the Marine Committee and Congress from criticisms which had been made upon them on account of the failure of the fleet to accomplish what had been expected of it?

Adams afterward wrote:—"this resolution of censure was not in my opinion demanded by justice and consequently was inconsistent with good policy, as it tended to discourage an officer, and diminish his authority by tarnishing his reputation." In another letter Adams says that he "could never discover any reason for the bitterness against Hopkins, but that he had done too much."

John Paul Jones in a letter dated September 4th, 1776, written at sea to Admiral Hopkins, when he was misinformed, as it seems, regarding the censure of Hopkins, says: "I know you will not suspect me of flattery when I affirm that I have not experienced a more sincere pleasure for a long time past than the account of your having gained your cause at Philadelphia in spite of party. Your late trouble will tend to your future advantage by pointing out your friends and enemies. You will thereby be enabled to retain the one part while you guard against the other. You will be thrice welcome to your native land and to your nearest concerns. After your late shock they will



see you as gold from the fire, of more worth and value, and slander will learn to keep silence when Admiral Hopkins is mentioned."

Brave and able men do not write such letters to men whose courage and ability are in doubt.

Why did not Admiral Hopkins upon the passing of the resolution at once resign his commission?

In the light of subsequent events that would appear to have been the best course for him to have pursued. He may have been urged by friends to retain his command. He may have hoped to retrieve his reputation by greater success and improved fortune. Moreover, he had good reason to believe that Congress did not attach much consequence to its censure. For within one week after the passage of the resolution the Marine Committee ordered him to dispatch four vessels on a cruise to Newfoundland and authorized him to purchase and fit out the Hawk which he had captured on his former cruise and to rename it the Hopkins. Judge Staples justly remarks:—"Such a compliment is seldom paid to an inefficient or unfaithful officer." The expedition to Newfoundland failed as did the one to North Carolina which the Marine Committee ordered. Hopkins exerted himself to the utmost to man his ships and again failed from the same causes and influences which had before defeated his plans.

In a letter to the Marine Committee he says, "I thought I had some influence in the state I have lived in so long, but find now that private interest bears more sway than I wish it



did. I am at a loss how we shall get the ships manned as I think near one-third of the men which have been shipped and received their monthly pay have been carried away in the privateers. I wish I had your orders whenever I found any man on board the privateers giving me leave to not only take him out but all the rest of the men; that might make them more careful of taking men out of the service of the state."

But this authority was not given him. Yet by withdrawing all the well men from some of the vessels he was able to man and send out from time to time the *Andrea Doria*, the *Cabot*, the *Columbus* and the *Providence* on various cruises, and they did effective work in destroying the enemies' commerce, capturing about fifty prizes in a few months. Matters went from bad to worse. The Marine Committee became exasperated with Hopkins's delays by reason of which it was severely criticised and Hopkins was much discouraged. While affairs were in this state, in December, 1776, a powerful British fleet sailed into Newport harbor and effectually bottled up the American fleet, which never again emerged as a fleet from Narragansett bay, though it rendered valuable service in protecting Providence from the enemy.

Nothing demoralizes an army or navy like inaction. Pent up at the head of the bay, discontent and insubordination bred among the officers and men. A few of the inferior officers of the fleet became actively hostile to the commander. They would probably have been powerless

to injure him except for the countenance and support of influential men upon shore whom he had deeply offended by his uncompromising attitude toward privateering when it conflicted with the interests of the navy.

A small cabal of these men secretly prepared and sent a petition to Congress against their commander. Some of the charges are so frivolous and absurd as at once to excite suspicion of the motives which inspired them. Three of the signers of the petition, including the chaplain of the fleet, admitted that they were induced to sign it by some gentlemen of the town and afterward over their own signatures confessed that the charges which they had made were not true.

Admiral Hopkins in his reply to these charges exposed the conspiracy against him and the motives of his assailants.

Lieutenant Richard Marvin, the prime mover in this affair, was brought before a court martial, consisting of six captains and seven lieutenants, who appear to have been all the officers of the fleet. The findings of the court martial were that Marvin had "treated the Commander-in-Chief of the American Navy with the greatest indignity and defamed his character in the highest manner by signing and sending to the Honorable Continental Congress several unjust and false complaints against the Commander-in-Chief in a private and secret manner," "that he was unworthy of holding a commission in the American Navy" and that "he deliver up his commission to the

Commander-in-Chief." This finding is of the greatest value in determining the merits of the controversy not only because it exonerates Admiral Hopkins, but because it is the testimony of men who had known the Commander for years and who had the best opportunity for obtaining knowledge of his true character. No amount of criticism can break the force of these findings. They are the findings of the proper court for trying such questions,—the court by which the charges against Admiral Hopkins should have been examined.

A careful examination of the proceedings before the Marine Committee upon the complaints of his subordinates shows that whether by his own fault, or otherwise, Admiral Hopkins did not have a full, fair and impartial trial.

It could not be impartial; because his judges were the very persons whose orders he had been accused of disobeying and of whom it was charged that he had spoken disrespectfully,—and this was one of the most serious charges made against him.

It was not a full trial; for an officer of his rank should not have been condemned without an examination of all the officers of the fleet.

It was not a fair and impartial trial; because his judges were his accusers and were greatly prejudiced against him, and interested in making him a scapegoat for their own failure to properly support him as the commander-in-chief of the fleet.

As there was in his day, so there probably will always continue to be a wide difference of opinion regarding Admiral Hopkins's success as a naval commander, and the justice of the action of Congress in dismissing him.

That he was a sincere patriot who served his country with ardent devotion to the best of his ability and that he was untainted by corruption of any kind few will doubt.

In the day of his adversity the people of Rhode Island stood by him. They did not accept the action of Congress as just or well founded. The opinions also of men like John Adams, William Ellery, delegates to Congress, James Manning, President of Rhode Island College, and John Paul Jones are entitled to great weight. They all expressed high esteem and respect for Mr. Hopkins after he had been censured by Congress and remained his life long friends.

In a letter to William Ellery he expressed a noble intention regarding his future course in these words:— "I am determined to continue a friend of my country, neither do I intend to remain inactive."

At the next election after his dismissal from the naval service he was sent as a deputy to the general assembly from North Providence and represented that town from 1777 to 1786. He was also during that time a member of the council of war appointed by that body and served on several committees which had charge of military affairs and aided in raising and drilling troops. In 1782 he was elected a trustee of Rhode Island College and served in that



capacity until his decease. In these and in other ways he served the state in the spirit of his letter to William Ellery for many years.

Amid the increasing infirmities of age and disease which for several years disabled him for active pursuits he maintained a cheerful disposition and deep interest in public affairs and in his friends, until on February 26, 1802, he fell asleep and was gathered to his fathers.

A careful consideration of the evidence touching upon the career of Esek Hopkins, without partiality and without bias, leads, I think, to these conclusions; that he was the ablest, most enterprising and successful sea captain of his time; that he was a true patriot and served his country with unselfish devotion; that as commander-in-chief of the first naval fleet of the country, in a new and untried position; without sufficient rules for his guidance and for the discipline of the fleet and without sufficient authority to enforce such discipline; without adequate support by Congress and by the colony in manning his ships, and against the antagonism of many selfish interests, he encountered great difficulties and obstacles with energy, courage and wisdom; that amid the greatest discouragements he displayed fortitude, patience and unfaltering faith in the ultimate triumph of the cause for which he labored; that his censure by Congress was unjust and undeserved; that his dismissal from the navy was upon insufficient evidence and upon grounds which were not proven; that the real ground of his dismissal was his lack



of success which Congress and the colony had rendered unattainable by him by neglecting to supply him with men and by refusing to enact such measures as would have enabled him to secure a sufficient number of men; that with the means at his command he rendered efficient service in protecting northern Rhode Island and in destroying the enemies' commerce by single ships which he sent forth for that purpose; that he deserved greater success than he attained; that while he was not a great naval genius, he was a commander of marked ability who with better fortunes and better support would have accomplished great things for his country; that he was an incorruptible man, and a good citizen who labored long and well for the people of Rhode Island and who well deserved the monument which was this day dedicated to his memory.

NATHAN W. LITTLEFIELD.







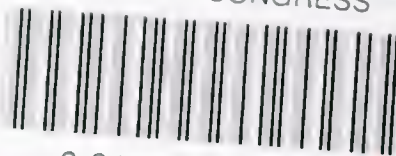








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